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[A PRESUMPTUOUS LOVER.]

CHRISTINE'S REVENGE;

OR,
O'HARA'S WIFE.

CHAPTER XII.

Oh! my Amy, shallow hearted;
Oh! my Amy, mine no more.
Oh! the barren, barren moorland;
Oh! the dreary, dreary shore!

He held his head down, this rebel lad who had loved a noble's daughter, when he entered the proud mansion where he was reckoned as lower than the footmen.

He was proud and eloquent in the secret chamber among the conspirators, but here he felt tongue-tied, ashamed, it seemed to him, when he pulled the servants' bell and was admitted into the stately hall; that all the scene of last night was a sham, like those magnificent entertainments of the fairies which the legends of our childhood tell us of, when the gold melts into clay and the fruits and flowers wither into dust, and the gorgeous company dwindles into crawling reptiles, and the palace of silver and agate becomes an empty hovel.

What could he and those few men achieve against this mighty pampered aristocracy, with its wealth; its title; its honours; its army of soldiers; its cannons and guns, and ships and horses?

"A handful of us, after all," he said to himself, bitterly, as he entered the library, to go on with his work at the catalogue.

He went straight to the drawer where the papers lay. He took them out, sat down at a desk of humbler fashion than my lord's, which had been brought in for him, and he began to write.

He worked on patiently for some time. All at once the door opened and Christine Mattelle glided softly in.

"Hush," she whispered. "Don't speak. I don't wish prying servants to hear your voice. I have said I am here to help you, Roland. You must marry Elaine Harwood this month!"

He let his pen drop and stared at her. She was not an unpleasant woman to look upon then, her shining raven hair neatly arranged; her long, flowing, black silk dress; a ruby ribbon at her throat. Her eyes glittered; her white teeth gleamed. There was a hectic bloom on her dark cheek.

"Roland," she said, "we go away to Ireland next month. You, I and two dear pupils, and good, stupid, learned, Fraulein Secher, and a half dozen servants."

"And why that?"

"I have schemed it all. I have talked to the doctor. You know how nervous Lady Clarice is? Nervous and dyspeptic, poor little puny wretch? Well, there's nothing like mountain air for that, and above all that, native air; she was born at Donnamore, so I told Sir Peter Woodson, the family doctor. Indeed, I have been at him this fortnight, and now he has given the order, and we are to start in April. The earl and countess will remain till the end of May in London for the season. The children of course don't mix in those gaieties. Now, I hope you see clearly what I mean and what you ought to do."

"But, indeed, I don't, mademoiselle," Roland answered. "I love Lady Elaine. I have sworn that she shall be my wife, that I will clasp that dainty, shrinking form to my heart, that those proud, sweet, red lips shall meet mine in burning kisses, wherein our very souls shall mingle, but how can this be yet? She is cold as ice, I am poor as Job. There is nearly all of the money I owe you," taking some gold and silver from his pocket and laying it on the table; "it has cost me hunger and cold to scrape that together. If Elaine is my wife she must live with me. Can she live in my London garret, or in my mother's cabin at Donnamore?"

"For a time, say three weeks, she will live with you in apartments in the country," Christine answered, coolly. "After that she must return for a time as the Lady Elaine Harwood to her parental home, for a time only. Meanwhile you must make haste to become famous. You must join some of these societies which have for their object the liberation of your country." Christine paused, bit her lower lip, and watched Roland with a sinister gleam in her black eyes. Then she continued: "When your name is known from one end of the kingdom to the other, as I do not scruple to predict that it will be known, then come forward boldly and claim your bride. I will stand by your side."

"But she is unconscious, unwilling. She has for me only a pitying contempt. You know it. Ah, let me win fame and fortune first, and then lay my laurels at her feet and ask for love."

"I tell you that she must be your wife within the month, or she will never be your wife at all," Christine answered. "Neither is she so unconscious or so cold. She reads yards of poetry that you write, and the tears stand in

her eyes. She is very near to loving you, far nearer than you think, and she will love you intensely. Oh, I am certain of it. Now, listen to my plan. You must hurry down to-morrow to an address which I will give you. It is a remote, romantic village amid the Surrey hills, there giving your own name and hers. You must have the banns put up for your marriage. You must call her Elaine Harwood, yourself Roland O'Hara. You must take lodgings for yourself at an inn, which I will tell you of. You must sleep one night in the parish and rent the rooms; that is the law. You must then fix the day for the marriage with the parson, and you and Elaine must be there in time on the morning in question. I have arranged everything."

Roland stared speechless at Mademoiselle Mattelle, while she described the daring scheme which was to give him to wife the lovely daughter of an earl—an heiress in her own right to a fine estate in the very county where this preposterous wedding was to take place. Doubts and suspicions of Christine's motives filled his mind.

Revenge! Yes, that was plain enough; revenge on Lady Donnamore, by making her cherished daughter the wife of a peasant, but Roland fancied there was yet more, believed that Christine Mattelle had still deeper humiliations in store for the countess, whose she hated with so ferocious, one might even say, so bloodthirsty a hatred.

"You have planned all this?" Roland cried; "it is like a romance or a dream. It can never, never come to pass."

"I have even spoken to the clergyman," mademoiselle answered, throwing herself negligently into an armchair, and folding her arms. "Don't look alarmed; the earl and countess went this morning to Windsor on a visit to the Queen, with the Duchess of Redhill. They will not return until to-morrow; there is a state dinner to-night, and the earl, you know, is in the Cabinet, and the countess pulls the strings. Poor man, he is only a puppet, who dances to her orders, so we are alone, you and I, except for the servants and the children."

"Oh! give me credit for diplomacy. Lady Julia Saville went away last night to visit a fast and furious marchioness, who has a bijou villa near Richmond, and Captain Fitz-Stephens is there also. Yes, we are alone, don't be afraid, listen and don't look scared. I went away to visit my aunt last week, having humbly prayed for a holiday. I have no aunt, to tell the truth. I had studied a map of Surrey, and I had discovered a very out of the way village, with an out of the way name, twelve miles from any town, and quite at the other end of the county to that where Lady Elaine's estate is situated."

"It is on the borders of Hampshire—a little village called Hetly Heath—a wild spot, with bare downs stretching round in all directions. A few thatched cottages, a village church, a village shop, a village inn, an old parsonage house overgrown with ivy. I went and called at the parsonage, and asked to see the vicar, whom I had heard was a deaf, forgetful, stupid old man of eighty—indeed it was the great age and manifold infirmities of that worthy man which induced me to select the village of Hetly Heath as the scene of my operations."

"I had been looking out for just such a man, and just such a spot, for two months. I asked old Mr. Hunt to put up the banns for my young cousin, Roland O'Hara, who was going out to New York as a clerk in a counting-house, and Elaine Harwood, the orphan daughter of a doctor left penniless."

"I said that I approved of early marriages—that a wife would keep you steady in a foreign land. Why trouble you with dry details? The old man agreed with all I said, gave me wine and cake, and came with me to the garden gate with a black velvet cap on his head to protect him from the March wind. Your banns were put up last Sunday, and the Sunday before, there only remains next Sunday. Before that you must sleep at Hetly Heath, at the 'Little

Briton' Inn, and you must fix the wedding day. I have said to-morrow, Wednesday, week."

"And Lady Elaine?"

"She knows nothing, of course."

"Then do you mean that I am to ask her to marry me at this church in this village?"

"Yes, and then you must remain a week at the inn, or more, with your wife. You must win her heart and soul. You must pour forth the torrents of your eloquence, and tell her daily of your overwhelming adoration. You must take her heart by storm; there is no opportunity until she is your wife."

"She will never consent!"

"Chicken heart!" cried Christine, contemptuously; "it makes me ill to hear you raise objections. I have done all that you should have done, had you been a man of action instead of a sentimental dreamer."

Roland looked down.

"Your reproaches do not humiliate me," he said. "I have thought of her before myself; this marriage vow may blight her life."

"It will make your fortune, and you love her."

"What am I to do? Tell me, wonderful woman?"

"Presently, I will send Elaine in here to bring me a book which is not here, and which she will not be able to find. You help her search, then fall on your knees, and swear that unless she consents to marry you, you will take your own life. She will then, in mingled fear and compassion and love, half consent. I will come in at that intense moment, and she will try in terror to escape, but leave the rest to me."

In after years Roland often looked back to that cold March evening, with its pink and primrose lights in the clear heaven, the richly furnished library, the books bound in deep colour and gold, the red fire burning in the low, polished grate, the tall woman, slender and supple, with the flashing eyes, the sinister yet enticing smile, the long, flowing dark robe, the knot of blood-red ribbon at the throat.

He knew her in after years as a woman whom revenge possessed like an incarnate fiend—a woman who would have trampled over his dead body remorselessly to gain her ends, and he saw how anxious she had been to blight the whole life of the young Elaine—how careless she was of the terrible consequences of this maddest of mad marriages to himself—and he anathematised her in his heart.

As it was he listened entranced to the flattering voice. It was a chance—a desperate one, but he felt that it was a chance—of winning a fair young bride for whose sake he was honestly willing to die.

"I will do it if I can," he said, grasping the small hand of Christine in both his own.

"Be swift and sure and silent," she answered, releasing her hand and gliding from the room.

Roland waited some time, too much confused and excited to go on with his work; but when he found Elaine did not arrive he took up his pen and went on with the catalogue.

After some time he heard a hesitating hand upon the door-handle. He flew to open it, and there entered Lady Elaine.

She wore a dress of white cashmere. A heavy gold necklet and locket were her sole ornaments. Her hair was still in that long, thick plait, tied with blue ribbon.

It was a simple, rich afternoon dress, but Roland thought she looked like an angel from the canvas of one of the old masters.

In a moment it was done. He gave her no humble and respectful greeting. He flung himself at the girl's feet, and poured out a world of burning words which frightened her.

Never since the world was made had man loved woman as he loved Elaine. Without her his life was dross. With her it was bliss. And yet all he cared for was to be her slave—still to call her wife—and if she could not love him he would die by his own hand.

He meant it at the moment, for Christine had excited his mad hopes, fanned the flame of his love, and to fall from such a height would have been destruction.

Elaine shivered and half sobbed, then remem-

bered that her mother had taught her to repress emotion, and she struggled to free her hand, which the boy had caught, and was devouring with his kisses and watering with his tears.

"Roland, you know it is impossible. You forget."

"No! no! no! I do not forget. I am a hound—a slave, as the mire in the streets. Still I love you. My soul is gone out to meet yours, Elaine. Our spirits are united, and will be in all the ages to come!"

He had written some musical verses with the same weird, wild meaning. Elaine listened, half fired by his impassioned pleading, but only half; and then there glided into the now dusky library Christine Mattelle.

In a moment Elaine turned, and would have rushed away as the wily governess had foreseen, but mademoiselle intercepted her flight.

"What is the matter," she asked, pleasantly, "with my fair Elaine?"

As she spoke she drew her pupil to her arms, and laid her hand lightly on her golden head. Christine was not given to caresses. At the moment Lady Elaine felt the soothing effect of her cool, gentle hand on her own hot temples.

"What is the matter? Why does the bird flutter so?"

"It is I. I have told Lady Elaine that I adore her; that I shall go mad unless she gives me hope."

Elaine raised her head and spoke sharply:

"You are indeed mad to tell what I have thought a secret. Now my mother will know, and I wish I was dead."

She burst into a storm of sobs. Christine's wicked eyes shone with triumph.

"She is won!" she said to herself. "She will yield now."

Then Christine turned to the young girl, and amazed her with an eloquent and passionate pleading of Roland's cause.

She told the astonished girl that she had always known his secret, that she saw and knew that one day he would be a world renowned poet, whom kings would delight to honour. She said that he was already other than he seemed—entrusted with mighty secrets. She said that the name of O'Hara should take rank with those of Dante, Tasso, Goethe, Byron, and Tennyson. Finally she took the girl's hand, placed it in that of Roland, and said:

"Marry him—be his wife. A few weeks after that he must go on a secret mission abroad. You must return to your mother, and keep your secret until your husband comes back, claims you before the world, and asks you to share his throne."

"Oh! mademoiselle! my father! my mother!"

"They do not know," Christine answered, with a smile. "They will never know until all the world bows down to the great genius of the century. Promise, lady, to be his wife. You will crush his life if you refuse. You will quench the divine fire of his genius."

And it came to pass that Elaine whispered the words of promise, and was forthwith caught to the young man's heart, and mad kisses were pressed on her lovely lips. Something like love awoke in her young heart. She went away and dreamed of Roland, and meanwhile the plans of Christine were put into execution.

First of all the countess fell in with the arrangement that her daughters and their two governesses should go to Donnamore, and meanwhile Christine Mattelle begged to be allowed to take Lady Elaine to Cheltenham for three weeks to take singing lessons from a very celebrated Italian teacher, whose whim it was to remain there for a month at that time.

"And I will pursue his plan when I get her at Donnamore," said the schemer to the countess. Many letters dated from Cheltenham she wrote a week before starting with Elaine for the remote village of Hetly Heath, and an agent of hers received the letters of the countess in Cheltenham and posted Christine's in return. It was a daring scheme, one that might have broken through any moment, but it happened otherwise.

Lady Elaine and her crafty governess arrived

one bright March afternoon at the little humble inn in the Surrey village. There they slept that night. The next day Elaine, the girl bride, Roland, the boy bridegroom, stood before the old deaf vicar and the holy altar in the village church, and they twain were made one flesh!

And half an hour afterwards Christine went on in truth to Cheltenham, and Elaine was left alone with her husband.

All through the years that followed Elaine looked back to that strange week as if she herself had played no part in it, but some other pale, surprised, timid, half-loving, half-timid, wholly ignorant girl.

She was the strangest wife that ever man had. She was in a hurry for the time to pass. She wished Roland gone, and she again with her young sister and her governesses. She spoke but little to Roland. She began to tire of his fervid caresses.

At last one day, as she sat at breakfast with him silent, unable to eat, she looked up, and cried with joy:

"Ah, at last! Here is mademoiselle come for me."

She sprang forward to meet her.

"Oh, I am glad," said the girl bride, flinging herself into Christine's arms, "so glad. I am tired of this horrid little house. You will take me away?"

Roland grew deadly pale. Christine smiled a cruel smile. She did not wish Elaine to be happy in her love; it was enough that she was his wife, tied to a peasant husband till death parted them!

"My dear Roland," she said, gaily, "you have scarcely the look of a bridegroom."

"I am ill," he answered, and he rushed from the room, and wandered out upon the bare heath.

"My wife does not love me," he said to himself; "and I must part from her before I have won one single voluntary kiss from her lips." His eyes filled with tears. All at once he heard a voice that he knew, the voice of his wife, talking to Christine on the other side of a high hedge.

"He is not a gentleman, mademoiselle. I am the wife of a peasant, who puts his bread at dinner, it is true; and, oh! I wish that I was dead!"

Roland stood rigid as a corpse. He felt his heart sink. All the hero and the demigod died in him; all the demon and the rebel awoke. He vowed a terrible vow and fled like a maniac from the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

How could I tell
I should love thee away
When I did not love thee near?

At various points the breezy common land of Hetly Heath was cut up into fields of corn or meadow-grass.

Christine Mattelle and Lady Elaine were walking slowly under the shadow of a budding hawthorn hedge, whereon the tiny green points were ready to burst into leaf.

A large field of ploughed land, as yet red and naked, stretched to their right. In a few weeks young corn would shoot up, emerald green, in those long furrows; but yet those germs of verdure and golden plenty lay yet asleep in the heart of the earth, even as the passions of Elaine, that young wife of ten days, lay dormant within the depths of her unawakened soul.

A fresh wind blew over the face of the land. The yet bare trees bowed gaily in the gentle breeze. The sun shone in a pale clear sky. It was a bright, mild day of early spring. Down in the hollows of the heath violets were abloom, and along the bank whereon the hedge was planted the turf was aflame with the pale fire of primroses.

Elaine was not sixteen years old, and yet the most fervid and impassioned love vows that mortal man can to mortal woman utter had been poured into her ears.

She was a "wife." The holy name was hers. A priest of holy church had joined her hand to Roland O'Hara's for life.

The lad's rash vow had been fulfilled. He had clasped her in his arms. Her heart had beaten against his. She had, at his request, murmured those sweet, thrilling words, "I love you," into his ear. And Elaine knew no more of man's love than she had done at ten years' old of mother's love, when she nursed and dressed and caressed her doll.

Poor Elaine! The mystery and deep pathos of her lot was making itself felt in her heart. She knew that she had taken a desperate step. She was sorry she had taken it. She could not understand her feelings towards her peasant husband.

First of all she honestly believed that he was the handsomest and cleverest man in the world; but she believed in him as she believed in Julius Cæsar or Napoleon the Great—without an atom of real enthusiasm, only with a sort of kindly admiration, such as a schoolgirl gives to those heroes.

Then many things about Roland annoyed her. His Irish brogue, which, though softened, was still palpable to her acute ears; his cutting his bread at dinner-time; his shabby clothes.

That he was punctiliously cleanly in his habits and person did not strike her as indicating refinement, because, naturally, Lady Elaine had never witnessed any save cleanly habits in all her life, but she felt—ah! how painfully—that Roland, with all his genius, and all his beauty, and all his love for herself, was not of her class! And, great heaven! he was her husband. How in the name of the wonderful had it come about?

Neither Christine nor Roland's wife had the remotest idea that the unhappy young man had heard Elaine's disdainful mention of him. Had he stayed a little longer he might not have run away so madly, for he would have discovered that Elaine did not loath and despise him as he believed she did.

"You certainly have not married a pretty painted fop, *ma chère*," said the governess; "Roland does not set the fashion in boots or wristbands, neither can he boast of that blue blood of which they have taught you to be proud, and at which all the sensible thinkers of the age, all the giants of the intellect in your country and in mine, laugh so heartily. No, but he is above all these, even as Shakespeare was above the dandy lords of old Elizabeth's court."

Elaine sighed.

"I know he is noble," she said, "but—"

"But you have no heart. You cannot love him," said Christine, with a bitter sneer. "The capacity of your aristocrats for love is small and very weak."

"I do not know what love is, as I have read of it, and as Roland feels it," Elaine cried. "Oh, mademoiselle, have I not made a mistake? Was I not married too soon? I do not feel as I should feel towards Roland, I am sure I do not, and yet I like him—love him almost. In time I think I may love him nearly as he loves me, but, oh, I long to be with my parents and with Clarice!"

"A devoted wife?" sneered Christine. "I suppose it is in the blood of all the race of aristocrats."

"And what is that?" Elaine asked, innocently.

"A difficulty in being able to love a woman's own husband. All of you, as a class, turn your affections towards the husbands of other women, or towards gay bachelors. Your ladyship will be as fashionable as the Lady Julia Saville."

Lady Elaine turned pale, her blue eyes flashed.

"How dare you, mademoiselle, talk so to me! I know right from wrong; I know that whatever happens, I must never love any other man, save only Roland, as long as we both shall live."

"But you find it seems that you do not love him?"

"I should if he had more of the manners of our class," Elaine answered, thoughtfully, "and in time he may acquire them. Let us go back

now to the house, we have been out two hours. Roland will be there waiting for us, poor fellow. After all, I shall be sorry to leave him, he will feel it so terribly."

And Lady Elaine sighed a deep sigh.

Christine Mattelle and Roland's wife of ten days entered the little inn parlour, which was the private sitting room of the wedded pair, and they found it empty. Elaine looked around in surprise.

"He is not here," she said. "How odd," and she looked about with a startled glance.

Christine was not ill-pleased at the anxiety the young wife displayed as the hours went on and Roland did not return. Christine Mattelle was not a fiend unless where her immediate love of vengeance was concerned. Fain would she have seen Elaine whom she did not dislike, and Roland whom she liked, happy in each other's love, "romantically," "foolishly," "blindly infatuated with each other."

The world which scoffs at love judges thus such devotion, and calls such yielding up and absorbing self in another by those scornful names.

Christine wished with all her heart that Elaine would so love O'Hara. She would have been delighted to see the earl's daughter defy the world, and boast with all a young wife's impassioned fervour to her proud countess mother of her mad idolatry, of her peasant husband.

She would have been rejoiced to see the countess writhing in bitter mortification at the hardihood and daring of a beautiful rebellious daughter, but this could not be. Elaine, timid, cold, childish, her passions all unawakened, already regretted the wild marriage into which her governess had driven her.

If the countess ever found the sad secret out and raved like a lioness at her child—if she spurned her with her foot, and called her harsh names, Elaine would only crouch at her feet and weep.

Christine saw very plainly that love had not yet transformed Elaine. She was still more Lady Donnamore's daughter than O'Hara's wife.

"I begin to need food, *ma chère*," said Christine to Elaine, with a smile. "Have you not then ordered dinner to come up? How is it that your husband does not return?"

"I can't tell how it is," Lady Elaine answered, going to the window and looking out upon the little garden ablaze with spring flowers, daffodils, crocuses and lilies of the valley, and then across at the breezy common where the gorse was as yet dark and unblossoming, where white sheep dotted the hollows, and above which the pale, bright sky shone, and opal-tinted clouds floated.

The daylight last long in March, but at length the brightness faded and the west grew red, and then twilight stole up stealthily over the plain like a dusty giant silently taking long strides, and Roland had not returned.

Elaine stood close to the window now with her damask cheek pressed against the cold glass pane, looking sideways across the common, wondering and fearing, and with a dull pain at her heart. Roland was her husband—her very own; nearer to her in the sight of Heaven than any other being on earth; bone of her bone; flesh of her flesh, and somehow how was it? Those words of holy writ rang in her ears that night:

"What the Lord hath joined together let no man put asunder."

She had heard those words long ago in the schoolroom in Belgrave Square. Fraulein Secher had read them out one Sunday morning when the weather kept pupils and governess all in the house.

"Perhaps I have not been kind enough to poor Roland," she said to herself. "I have not really loved him, I am afraid—until now, but if he is dead! If he has fallen into the river and been drowned! If he has crossed a railway line and a train has gone over him! If I am

never to see him again alive, I shall not be happy again, not if I live a hundred years."

The girl wife could no longer see the shrubs tossing in the melancholy east wind, nor the pale crescent moon sailing in the sky where wild clouds with fantastic shapes were hurrying along, for her blue eyes were dim with tears. Pity is akin to love. Elaine was pitying Roland now in the very depth of her heart, thinking with something very like longing of his encircling arm and fervid caresses of her husband.

She sighed. What was this dull aching at her heart, which told her that never again on this side time would she see Roland, the boy bridegroom? The beautiful impassioned youth, gentle towards her as a young mother towards her babe? A peasant; a poor clerk; a painter's model; a toiler at the troublesome catalogue of her mother's library; and oh, something more than all these, a poet, whose verses should one day:

Make the weeper laugh,
The laughter weep;
He who had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions
In his craft of will.

"Oh, mademoiselle," cried Elaine, "will you not ring the bell and ask Mrs. Munday, the landlady, what she thinks has become of Roland?"

Christine had been leaning with her face hidden in the cushions of the chintz-covered sofa. She rose now and stared blankly out of the window.

"We must have dinner," she said, "or we shall be faint. Yes, I will ring the bell," and she pulled the worsted bell-rope lustily.

"Serve the dinner, if you please," she said, with her glittering smile, to the little servant who appeared.

"And, oh," cried Lady Elaine, "ask Mrs. Munday what she thinks is the matter that my husband does not come back."

Christine clapped her hands and she laughed wildly as soon as the servant's back was turned.

"Why do you laugh?" Elaine asked, in cold, displeased tones.

"I laugh, ma chère, because I rejoice to see a human heart—a wife's heart, awoken in your little marble breast. I should have thought you would have been grateful to a badly-aimed shot from the other side of a hedge, which should have gone through the brain of your husband and have left you free of a peasant love."

"Ah, mademoiselle, why then did you urge me to marry Roland if you thought me so wicked, heartless a creature as that?"

"For reasons, Lady Elaine," Christine answered; "reasons greater than your pride or even your mother's pride; greater even than poor Roland's love. But, oh, I am glad you love him, for if you did not you would not have stood so long at that window with that anxious face and those longing eyes—a young wife watching for her husband. What can be more touching?"

But there was after all a ring of sarcasm in Christine's tone, which cut Elaine like a knife. She shivered a little as she turned towards the fire. It was sinking and growing a little dim for want of being stirred. Lady Elaine, with over a dozen servants to do her bidding, had hardly ever stirred a fire in her life.

She grasped the poker daintily now, and stirred it somewhat feebly, whereat Christine laughed a laugh of derision, seized the poker, taking it almost rudely from Elaine, and then she stirred the fire very briskly and put on more coal.

"Warm your hands, Lady Elaine. I will shut out that melancholy moonlight and the desolate panorama of the desolate heath, with these shadows of the tossing evergreens in the garden. My dear, who would exist in a hole like this, with no other faces to look into than Mrs. Munday's, and the stupid servants and the rustic villagers? And the face of Nature, too, which is always 'sublime and terrible,' as was our great revolution to those who study it. Nature's face! Ha! ha!"

Christine folded back the shutters, barred them, drew the curtains, sat down on a low stool, and watched the sweet face of Elaine by the flickering light of the dancing flames.

Mrs. Munday entered with the roast fowl and sausages that mademoiselle herself had ordered on her arrival at the little inn. The ladies sat down to a plain but excellent dinner. Christine's spirits were boisterous.

She ate heartily, and drank some of the home-brewed ale, and when the cloth was removed she ordered a bottle of port wine and some figs and almonds, which the landlady had procured for the dessert of her guests.

Elaine ate nothing. She sat pale and sorrowful, listening, watching, with a dull fear at her heart of she knew not what. Roland's dinner was put away for him.

"He can eat a cold chicken with his tea, doubtless," said Christine, "when he comes in."

But the evening deepened into night, and Roland did not return. Christine herself grew a little alarmed when midnight struck, and the young, adoring husband was still away from his anxious wife.

(To be Continued.)

TO A LOVED ONE.

'Tis not a face and form divine or eye of
liquid blue
That holds my heart in silken bonds and
keeps me ever true;
Such things, like summer, pass away and
leave no trace behind,
Though beautiful to gaze upon, were never
made to bind
A heart like mine, whose every pulse beats
but alone for thee,
And would not, if it had its will, wish ever
to be free.

Bright hopes of youth too pass away like
clouds do o'er the sky;
As flowers bloom in innocence they blossom
and they die.
And so it is with love that's based on
beauty's form alone,
It has no chance of happiness when that
frail thing has flown.
Then if we worship at a shrine let it be of
the mind,
In death it loses not its power, but leaves
a spell behind. O. P.

A WOMAN of extraordinary size died recently at Clayton-le-Moors. Her name was Martha Grey, wife of William Grey, and she was a native of Pendleton. She was 29 years of age, and weighed 28 stone, measuring 86 inches round the waist, 23 inches round the arm, 18 inches round the ankle, 26 inches round the calf, and 29 inches from shoulder to shoulder.

A STROKE of rare good fortune has befallen an officer now serving with his regiment in the Khyber Pass. Some years ago he quarrelled with his father, ran away from home, and, as is common in such cases, enlisted as a private in a foot regiment. By degrees he rose, and now holds the position of adjutant to his corps. Quite recently his father died, and evidently had forgiven the truant son, seeing that he has left him a tidy little fortune of £60,000 and an estate near Rockferry, in Cheshire.

DR. MILLINGEN, one of the medical men who attended Lord Byron in his last illness, and who was present at the poet's death, at Missolonghi, on April 19, 1824, has died at Constantinople. He had been during very many years a resident of the European suburb of Pera. Dr. Millingen was to the last full of reminiscences of Byron, and it is to be regretted that he has left behind him no written record of his intercourse with the poet. Such memoranda, it is stated, the Doctor had drawn up long since; but these precious notes, with all his other papers, were destroyed in the great fire at Pera in 1870. Mr. Trelawney is now nearly the only survivor among those who knew Byron intimately.

THE END OF 1878.

Does the record of 1878 contain anything that will make it a notable year in the calendar of the century? What are the claims of the year to the respect and memory of the future? That a continental war has ended and one in Asia begun; that Europe is still suffering financial and industrial depression; while America is well advanced towards a solid prosperity; while South America, North Africa, India and China, have been smitten with drought and famine.

These occurrences, however big with importance to the present dwellers upon earth, will but faintly interest humanity in 1978, and have but small effect probably upon the world's welfare in future ages. Possibly some obscure inventor, perhaps so poor that he is troubled to raise money enough to pay his patent fees, may have developed some thought or discovered some principle that will influence the future more than all these great events together, which will do more to signalise the year just ended than the achievements of all other men combined. It may be that discoveries, now well known but little esteemed, contain the germs of scientific, social, and industrial discoveries and inventions, to which the world is looking for the grandest results, will quickly fade into comparative insignificance. Every age is blind to the elements of its own greatness; and, as a rule, the unheralded achievement is the one that after ages chiefly magnify.

But, to drop philosophy for fact, what, that is specially noteworthy from the standpoint of the present, has been done during the past year? It has been a year of great activity in almost every region of effort. The outposts of every science have been more or less advanced, and the main army of occupation, pressing into regions of the unknown and the obscurely known, has moved forward perhaps as steadily as during any year of the past; yet few events stand out with special prominence, very few promise to open up new lines of research, new fields of industrial enterprise, or new interpretations of the phenomena of nature.

No striking geographical or geological discoveries have been made—unless we admit the caverns of Luray—and no extraordinary engineering enterprises have been begun or finished, with the single exception, perhaps, of the transference of Cleopatra's Needle from the bank of the Nile to our own shores. In mechanics, inventions and improvements have been many and valuable. In physics, the microphone has made much noise out of little; but that interesting toy cannot justly be accredited to 1878.

Mr. Edison's microtasmeter promises to rank among the most powerful and valuable of scientific instruments for exploring the secrets of nature; but with the exception of its use in measuring the heat of stars and that of the sun's corona, its revelations are prospective. The discovery of an active crater in the moon by Dr. Hermann Klein seems to prove that volcanic energy is still at work on our satellite.

During the latter part of the year the excitement in regard to the progress of the electric light presents a notable feature of the year's record. Apparently this is at present the field of greatest speculative and practical activity. The use of electric illumination is spreading rapidly, and there are on all sides promises of the speedy practical solution of the great problem.

The fairly successful Exhibition at Paris, however important in its time, presented no feature or achievement to give it lasting fame. The duplexing of the Atlantic cable marks but a step, though an important one, in a familiar path of progress. The recent claim of Mr. Lockyer that he is convinced of the essential oneness of the elements, and is able to demonstrate that all matter is fundamentally the same, is much more likely to mark an era in the history of science—if it turns out to be true; and a century hence it may be the best known achievement of 1878.—Ed.]



[WATCHED.]

FRINGED WITH FIRE.

By the Author of "Clytie Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl," "Poor Loo," etc.

CHAPTER III.

CLARA'S LOVE DREAM.

—When love looks out with roguish eye,
And smiles on every passer-by.

A whole month has passed since that morning when Charles Rentroll met Florence and Clara in the narrow lane leading to the river.

The lilacs and laburnums that then were only giving promise of their future wealth of fragrance and of beauty have blossomed and thereby gladdened the hearts of many men and many women, and now are fading; spring is giving place to summer, and the wind no longer blows cold and chill as it did on that evening when Arthur and Florence parted.

As great a change as that which had come over the face of the earth, if not quite as palpable to the ordinary looker on, had come over Clara Cousins in this short but eventful time.

No longer the careless, laughing girl, rather frivolous and somewhat given to the use of slang, whose great grievance in life was that she had never had a lover; the enchanted cup has touched her lips, and never again shall the thoughtless, happy laugh of ignorance and innocence ripple from her lips and indicate to all observers her freedom from care and trouble and from love.

For Clara Cousins is in love at last and has a lover, though this after all is nothing, a mere everyday occurrence with most girls, and it is not that which has made her so absent and pre-occupied, though it might have made her imaginative and dreamy; but the truth is, her love and her lover are a secret; one which he has

bound her by the most solemn promise never to speak of—dared her to tell, and the delicious and intoxicating draught of love is poisoned at the very first sip by this mysterious secrecy.

If she tried she could not tell you how all this came about.

They had met at the Edgecombes several times, and he, partly out of politeness, and partly to pique Florence, had offered to escort her home.

After the first two or three occasions the walk home had not been a direct one; the balmy evenings, the perfume of flowers, and the song of birds might well tempt them to extend their ramble, and though the farthest thing possible from Charles Rentroll's intention was that of seriously making love to this pretty and not over wise little maiden, his natural manner of excessive, almost gushing politeness, which was so strange to her, led her into showing the state of her own thoughts and feelings more completely than she would otherwise have done.

Florence, knowing the value of the courteous phrases which flowed so glibly from his mellifluous lips to almost any member of her sex, would have taken them simply for what they were worth, but to Clara they meant far more, and she treasured his pretty speeches in her heart as though such words had never been spoken by man to woman before.

Once or twice he had bent down as though he would kiss her that first evening when he walked to her father's door with her, but she had turned her head away, feeling truly enough that he could not really care for her in so short a time.

He did not press for it, but the next time they parted, and again the next, the same mute proffer of a caress was made, until one night—a night which Clara would never forget while life pulsed and throbbed in her veins—she turned her face to him, a kiss was given and taken, he caught her madly in his arms, carried away by a feeling more violent perhaps, though not half so pure as the love in her heart; and then they wandered on again, giving utterance to the wild

emotions that swayed them, and at last, frightened at the lateness of the hour, for a neighbouring clock had struck midnight, Clara hurried home, promising before she parted with him not to breathe a hint of their mutual love to Florence, or to any living creature, and also consenting to meet him without going to the Edgecombes the following evening.

Charles Rentroll was dissatisfied with himself when he left Clara after this scene. He knew to what danger and peril they were drifting if she did not, and it is but doing him common justice to say, that either for the girl's own sake, or more probably for the very disagreeable consequences it might, if indulged in, entail upon himself, he wished to stifle the flame of passion which his own selfish recklessness had kindled.

As he walked back to his lodgings, quietly smoking his cigar, he decided that he would put an end to it at once, that he would meet her the next evening as appointed, and tell her that he ought not to have acted as he had done, that they could never be anything to each other but friends, that it would only be to her injury for the acquaintance to continue, and then, having taken leave of her, start off himself for London, and keep out of temptation and danger for a season.

Such was his resolution, and had he gone off the next morning, instead of deferring his departure until the day after, all would have been well. Clara might have pined for a while, then have felt humiliated, then indignant, and finally she would have despised and forgotten him.

But he had made the appointment, and he thought it wiser and kinder to keep it than to break it, besides, one can never rely upon a woman keeping anything to herself, he thought, and he felt confident that she would go and tell Florence, even exaggerating matters, until Florence also would blame and despise him, and he felt that this would be far more painful and difficult to bear than anything Clara could say or think or do.

So the next day he rode over to Malvern alone, enjoyed the scenery and the lovely weather, and thought it a bore that he should so far have committed himself as to make it necessary for him to leave this pleasant neighbourhood.

After dinner he returned to Worcester, and was at the appointed trysting place five minutes after the time agreed upon.

"I thought you were not coming," said the girl, with a lovely blush on her soft cheek, while her black eyes looked lovingly up to him; "it has seemed such a long, long day," she added, with a sigh.

"Has it? I have found it very short, but then I have been to Malvern. I am sorry to have kept you waiting," he continued, throwing away the end of his cigar, "and I scarcely know how to begin what I have to say; it isn't a pleasant subject."

The girl made no reply, except to shyly slip her hand into his and leave it there.

"Clara, you are tempting me," he exclaimed, excitedly. "I want to do what is right, to bring no wrong or harm to you, but you must not look at me like that; you must not love me; we can be nothing to each other. Do you understand? Nothing. I ought not to have spoken to you last night as I did; ought not to have kissed you, but you looked so sweet and pretty that I forgot myself, and now I have come to tell you so."

He had dropped her hand, and now stood with folded arms looking down at her, vexed with himself and sorry for her no doubt, but at the same time testing and weighing his power over her.

The white, agonised face which he saw might have satisfied him. For a moment words seemed to die away upon her lips, then she said, in a strained voice very unlike her usual tone:

"Surely, Charles, you have not kissed me as you have," and she shuddered, while her cheek was dyed with blushes, "or made me tell you that I love you, to say now that we must part and be nothing to each other! I cannot believe it; you are saying it to try me, to test my love; but it is cruel, Charles, very cruel, and it gives me a pain here," and she pressed her hand upon her heart. "I am not very strong, don't, pray don't put me to such a bitter test again."

And she laid her head upon his shoulder, for they were now seated side by side on a felled tree, and closed her eyes as though she would thus shut out the possibility of the separation he spoke of.

Charles Rentroll was never a very firm man where temptation in the guise of a pretty woman was concerned, and though he knew very well what he ought to do under the circumstances, he resolved to temporise, to enjoy this pleasant love song a little longer, before he resolutely put it away from him altogether.

"Silly little thing," he said, in a softer tone, while he clasped her waist with one hand, and gently smoothed her cheek with the other; "do you really care so much for me?"

"Yes, Charles, indeed I do; try me. Put my love to any test. Let me show you how true I can and will be, but don't talk of leaving me, of our being nothing to each other; that is like death to me! it would kill me."

There was silence for a few minutes. He bent down, pressed his lips lightly on her forehead, and then went on thinking out the problem before him.

"Clara," he said, at length, "I was not jesting or trying you when I said that we must part; there are reasons—though I cannot tell them to you now, I may be able to do so one day—why we can never be what we might wish to be to each other. The day may come when the obstacle will be removed, but that day is so far distant, that it is doubtful whether we shall either of us live to see it, and, it would not be fair of me, would not be just towards you, to keep you from marrying a man worthy of you, on the mere chance of my ever being free."

She shivered in his embrace, and after a pause jerked out, rather than asked:

"How can I marry anyone else while I love you?"

"Oh, you will get over that in time," he said, cheerfully; "it is not a very pleasant thing, I know, but it sometimes has to be done."

"Then you don't care for me? You don't love me?" she asked, lifting her head and looking at him.

If he had only possessed the courage to speak the truth now, to have told her that he liked her, that she amused and interested him, even excited a certain amount of wild passion in him, which she might easily mistake for love, but that he knew well enough would give out no ring of true metal; had he only done this even now, they might have avoided that dark future which lay before them; but he did not; the temptation was not to be resisted, and he said tenderly, even passionately:

"It is because I love you so, my darling, that I feel I ought to go away and never see you again."

"Then I won't be given up," said the girl, her face brightening as the glad earth brightens when the sun shines after a thunderstorm; "if you love me as I love you, I'll wait for you—yes, wait—I don't care if it is for twenty years—until you can marry me. I shan't be so awfully old even then, for I am but nineteen now."

"And I am forty," he said, mournfully.

"Are you really? Florence told me she thought you were only thirty-five."

"No, I am forty," he went on, "twenty-one years older than you, and I am old enough to know better than to allow you to waste your life in waiting for me; remember, I shall be an old man when you will be still young."

"I don't care. I would rather have you if you were as old as our vicar, and he is nearly eighty, than any other man, be he ever so young or ever so handsome, so I shall wait for you; if you had said you didn't love me, it might have been different."

"And suppose I say I don't love you, will you forget me then, Clara?"

"No, because you have just told me that you do, and therefore I know you would only say you don't, because you think you ought to say it, though it isn't true."

"But, Clara, it will be better for you to give me up. I admit I do love you, very, very dearly, but no one must ever know of it. I should be ruined, and it would injure you if others even suspected that we were more than the merest acquaintances, and your love for me could not stand the test. It is better, far better, that you despise me for so far forgetting myself last night, that you send me away and never bestow another thought upon me again."

He said this, it is true, but his arm tightened round her waist, and while persuading her to send him away, he kissed her as though they were never to part again.

Poor Clara, with her ignorance of the world, of its vices and virtues, and of the disguises which the former can easily assume, what could she do, but follow the instincts of her sex, and yield to the desire to sacrifice herself for the sake of the man she loved.

Now he was dearer than he could otherwise have been, she was giving up, perhaps the whole of her young life for him, and the very renunciation of self threw a fictitious halo and radiance over the creature for whom the sacrifice was made.

"I will be secret as the grave," she said, solemnly. "In my heart I shall feel that I am your wife, and until I am really so, I will be as true in thought, word and deed, as I shall be when you have a right to my obedience."

She was answered only by caresses, but when he spoke again it was to say:

"Florence, above all, must not be trusted!"

"No, I don't think she cares much for you," was the reply, that rankled in his heart when all the speaker's loving words and speeches had faded from his mind.

It was getting dark. No one half a dozen yards off could be distinguished, and they had not thought of intruders, when suddenly they heard a peculiar cough, and looking up, they

saw a tall, gaunt woman, walk slowly past. She seemed to take no notice of them, but Rentroll was alarmed.

"Do you think she has recognised us?" he asked, under his breath.

"Oh, no," was the reassuring answer; "she didn't even look this way, and if she did see us it would not matter, she never talks about people; it is my dressmaker, Chatty Duster."

"Any relation to the man I sent to prison?"

"Yes, his mother, but I don't think she grieves at his absence."

"All the same, I wish she had not come across us, and now I must say good-bye, it is getting late, and I must be in London to-morrow."

"Oh, Charlie, you are not going away from me already?"

"My love, I must; I have business that must be attended to, but you shall hear from me and I will come again soon; only remember our love must be secret; if it ever becomes known we shall be divided."

"It will never be known through me," was the reply, "for am I not already in heart and soul your wife?"

The answer was a kiss; but when they had left the spot and were quite out of sight of it, a figure stepped out from the shadow of the trees, and as though Clara's question was still sounding in the night air, said:

"No, and never will be, Clara Cousins."

Then, after looking to see if any token of their presence had been left behind by the lovers, this woman also went away in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

FLORENCE EDGEcombe's PERPLEXITIES.

Oh let me make thy future happy, love,
For souls like ours were meant for union.
Say, darling, wilt thou be my wife?

FLORENCE EDGEcombe was not a strong-minded woman—nay, she was not even a clever one, measuring talent by the standard which we use now-a-days.

She could never have written a book that any publisher would have published, painted a picture which any exhibition under the sun would have admitted, or held her own on any platform at a public meeting. This being the case, need I say that her father was disappointed with her.

At the very opening of her life, in fact, she had disappointed him, since he had fully made up his mind to have a son, while the fates, more determined still, had decided to give him a daughter.

The first shock over, however, he tried to console himself with the idea, that after all a woman, with his talent, which of course his child must inherit, could make much more noise in the world, with judicious assistance, than a man, and having settled this point to his own satisfaction, he went on amusing himself by writing brilliant nothings, and spending his wife's fortune until his genius should be appreciated.

He was a very handsome man even now, and five and twenty years ago, when he had been just called to the Bar and possessed a reputation for great talent, he had married an heiress. She was already in possession of a large fortune and had great expectations besides, and his friends thought what a very clever and successful man George Edgecombe was.

To a certain extent they were right; with no small difficulty he succeeded in getting his wife's fortune into his own hands and spending it, so that when she died, some two and twenty years after their marriage, he found himself on the verge of bankruptcy, with debts everywhere, and nothing but the handsomely furnished house in which he lived wherewith to satisfy his creditors, and the proceeds of that would not have paid a farthing in the pound.

Fortunately for him his late wife's brother, who had no friendly feeling towards him, but was very fond of his niece, Florence, came forward, bought up his debts, sold the furniture

of the house in Chester Square, allowing Florence to select what she wished to retain for their country cottage, and then promised to allow his brother-in-law a hundred a year if he would go and live in some quiet out of the way place far from London.

He told him very distinctly, however, that he would never pay his debts again, and therefore if he lived beyond his income, he must take the consequences.

George Edgecombe thought himself a very ill-used person, his brother-in-law was rich, why then could not he himself have whatever he required?

But Mr. Fenton did not see the matter in this light. He thought he had already done more for his brother-in-law than he deserved, indeed he told him frankly that if it had not been for Florence, he would have left him to get out of his difficulties as best he could alone.

So, having no other alternative, Mr. Edgecombe accepted the hundred a year, and having an idea that he would like to live in or near Worcester, went down there, took Jasmine Cottage that was then to let, and soon after Florence, with as much of the costly furniture as had been rescued from their old home, came down to keep him company.

He had been a man of trifles all his life, or with his opportunities he would have accomplished some work worth remembering, and now the luxury and elegance which graced the interior of his cottage amply compensated him for other far more important things which he had lost, and he soon fell back into his normal condition of happy self-satisfaction.

His library, which was a large and valuable one, had been preserved, and his books not only filled the room he called his study, but lined two sides of the dining-room, occupied corners of the drawing-room, and some of them even made their appearance in the bedrooms. So that after all George Edgecombe's lines might have fallen in far more uncomfortable places than they had done.

As I have observed, his daughter's want of genius, or rather her disinclination to follow the same pursuits as found favour in his own eyes, had been a great disappointment to him, and he therefore underrated and treated with indifference the real talent and industry which she did possess.

For Florence's acquirements were rather those which would have won her praise from the lips of Solomon, and those who believe that a woman's first duties are due to her own household, and that her chief pleasures should be found in her own home, than from those who admire the more showy acquirements that make her stand forward and fight the battle of life in the same ranks with men.

She was particularly fond of anything pertaining to household matters. She did the work of a housemaid gaily, superintended the cooking, and learnt to starch and iron in a manner which excited both the envy and admiration of her maid of all work, Mercy Duster.

"Indeed," Mercy thought, "there never was such a young woman as Miss Florence," and to this might be tacked another article of her belief, which was, "that there never was such a grunting, growling, discontented old fad as master."

Of course, Florence had learnt all the accomplishments which a modern young lady is supposed to excel in, and she was a very fair musician, besides possessing a sweet, well-cultivated, though not over powerful voice.

She was never idle, and consequently very seldom in low spirits, though life had seemed to want something, until her father one day brought home a young gentleman with whom he had been having a discussion. They had come to look at some book which Mr. Edgecombe said he possessed, and which would settle the point in dispute.

I am disposed to think that Arthur Wardour would have had the best of the argument, if he had not seen Florence seated at work in the elegant room into which his companion led him, but very certain it is that he allowed himself to be convinced, and accepted his defeat gracefully.

He then went on to make some complimentary remarks upon Mr. Edgecombe's large and well chosen collection of books, begged him to lend him one of his own productions, and made himself so exceedingly agreeable, that the disappointed man of the world, glad of such an appreciative companion, invited the young man to stay and dine with them, much to his daughter's vexation.

"We dine at six," he remarked in the same tone and with the same manner which he had used when liveried servants had obeyed his commands, and Edward Wardour expressed the pleasure it would give him to remain.

The one man thoughtless of his daughter's anxiety about the dinner to which he had invited a stranger at a moment's notice, and the other for the time oblivious of the fact, that a large dinner-party was to be given at Wardour Hall that very evening by his parents, at which a lady was expected whom they particularly wished him to marry, there being also a strong suspicion that the young lady herself was not averse to the arrangement.

"How ridiculous of papa to ask people to dinner in this unceremonious manner," muttered Florence, impatiently, as she went into the kitchen; "it is five o'clock now; they must have dinner at six, and what on earth am I to give them?"

"Give them the cold beef and that half fowl that's in the pantry, miss; they might go farther and fare worse any day," replied Mercy.

"Oh, that won't do. We have some tins of soup, haven't we? You must run down and try to get some fish, and I will curry the fowl and make a tart while you are away. Now, make haste, Mercy, do. You must be back in time to lay the table as I have taught you."

The next hour was a busy one for Florence, while Arthur Wardour was wondering why she remained away so long, and grew rather absent in his replies to Mr. Edgecombe, while his eyes every now and again wandered to the door. At length it was opened, but only to admit Mercy, who abruptly announced:

"Dinner'll be on the table in a minute," a hint that Mr. Edgecombe took at once, and led his guest up into his own room to make the slight preparations which, under the circumstances, were possible.

Edward Wardour was astonished to notice how exquisitely the small, unpretending rooms were furnished and fitted up, and, though of course he made no comment, he could not help contrasting this tiny habitation with the large, cold, and somewhat shabby-looking rooms at Wardour Hall.

One glance at the table, and Mr. Edgecombe was satisfied.

"The glass, silver and linen, though unpretending, were perfect, while soup, fish, curried fowl, cold beef and tart, made a very passable dinner, and the wine was certainly not bought out of Mr. Edgecombe's hundred a year, but had been part of the stock left in the cellar in town, when his wealth and greatness came to an untimely end.

Florence looked charming; her white hands gave no evidence of having been engaged so short a time before in handling saucepans, frying-pans and kettles.

She had changed her dress too, and the simple blue cashmere, though it was plain as the dress of a Quakeress, set off to great advantage her dark hazel eyes, gleaming brown hair, and white, wax-like skin.

A visitor at the cottage was rare enough to ensure her being amiable to him, after the first vexation about dinner was over, and Florence did all in her power to make the evening pass pleasantly to their guest now he was here.

She talked, as her father scarcely remembered to have ever heard her talk before, and had he not been sleepy, as was usually the case after dinner, he would have felt annoyed at her taking such a prominent part in the conversation.

He fell asleep after a time, however. He had got in the habit of doing so since he had been

reduced to dining with his daughter as his only companion, and Arthur Wardour seized the opportunity of asking for some music, and volunteered the remark that he played and sang a little himself.

So Mr. Edgecombe continued to doze, and Florence and her new acquaintance played and sang solos and duets, and both were pleased to discover that their voices harmonised well together. But when Mercy brought in coffee Mr. Edgecombe woke up, and as usual expected to monopolise the attention of his guest.

At ten o'clock Edward Wardour took his leave, but I am afraid the best part of his heart was left behind.

He went to the hotel where he had left his horse, and rode back to his father's house, a distance of five miles, his mind so full of Florence Edgecombe, that it was only when he came in sight of home that he remembered how vexed and angry his mother would be at his absence.

It was useless troubling himself about it now, however, besides, on consideration, he was very glad that he had been away from home that evening. He didn't want to marry Mary Landsdale; indeed, on looking at the matter seriously, he didn't mean to marry her, and, therefore, the less he encouraged his parents to entertain the belief would be better for all parties, with which conclusion he rode round to the stables, not caring to meet the departing guests who were then leaving the Hall.

"Missus was afeard you'd met with an accident, sir," observed the groom, as his young master dismounted.

"Oh, no; I am not likely to meet with accidents," was the careless reply, as he walked into the house.

He met his mother at the foot of the staircase, the last guest having just departed.

"So there you are at last, Arthur? Whatever has been the reason of your absence? I have been quite distracted about you."

"I am sorry for that, mother, though there certainly was no need for alarm; the fact is, I had forgotten all about your party until I had promised to stay and dine with the people at whose house I had called. Then it was too late to return, but I never thought you would be alarmed, or I would have sent a messenger."

"It was not that only, but Mary Landsdale was here, and of course she expected to see you."

"Then I am very glad I remained away. Mary is all very well as a friend, but there her charm for me ceases."

"Arthur, you know how your father and I have set our hearts upon this; surely you don't mean to disappoint us."

"I don't intend to marry anyone at present, mother, and when I do, I don't think it will be Miss Landsdale. Now, don't say any more about it to-night, I am tired and sleepy, and am going to bed. Good-night."

"Stop, Arthur. Where have you been to-night?" asked his mother, suspiciously.

"Dining with people whom you don't know," was the reply. "Good-night, mother," and snatching a kiss, he ran upstairs, mounting two or three at a time.

The next morning his mother made no comment upon his evasive answer to her question as to where he had been, but she determined to watch him closely; there was, she was quite convinced, some woman in the case, for never before had he spoken so positively about Mary Landsdale, hitherto, if he had not quite assented, he had not violently opposed the idea of marrying her, and by so doing joining her large estate to their own, and the old lady made up her mind to induce her husband to withhold from Arthur all the property over which he had the power of appointment, if he persisted in marrying any woman but the one chosen for him by his parents.

Of course, Arthur went to call on the Edgecombes as often as he could frame excuses for doing so. One day he would bring music for Florence to try over with him, at another time there was a rare book or periodical which Mr.

Edgcombe could not now obtain, until at last the young man's visits became daily ones, and one morning he considerably astonished Mr. Edgcombe, who was apt to forget that he had a marriageable daughter, by asking his permission to propose to her, though if the truth must be told, he had made pretty sure of the daughter's assent before he addressed her parent.

George Edgcombe hesitated, asked a good many questions, impressed upon the suitor's mind the fact that although Florence had no fortune, she had great expectations, and finally said she might do as she liked.

But Arthur's difficulties had only just commenced. He was not afraid of his parents, he was an only child, quite old enough to know his own mind, and though he had no independent income, part of the Wardour estate was entailed and must ultimately come to him.

When he told his father and mother—as he did the same day—that he had proposed to and been accepted by Florence Edgcombe, their anger was terrible. They vowed they would never consent to such a marriage, and would never give him one penny while they lived if he married her, and his mother declared that his father should bequeath every shilling at his command to a distant relative, and would never allow his son to enter his doors again as long as he lived.

Though he had expected some opposition, Arthur was not prepared for a storm like this, not that it made him hesitate for a moment, it only showed him that the realisation of his hopes was much further off than he had supposed, and that he must adopt some profession to make him independent of his parents.

Thus it was that he determined to be a barrister. He was twenty-three when he proposed to Florence. A legacy of two or three thousand pounds had been left to him by an eccentric aunt, but it was not to be paid until he had attained the age of twenty-seven; by that time he thought he would have been duly called to the Bar, and would be in a fair way of getting into practice, and then he should be able to marry, whether his parents opposed him or not.

He had once begged his mother to see Florence, and form her own judgment about her, without being blinded by prejudice, but Mrs. Wardour had positively, almost insultingly, refused, and her son never asked her again.

When he had gone to London, though she would not see Florence, she had a close watch kept upon her, and at length, not being satisfied with the progress which she seemed likely to make in thwarting her son's plans, she determined to secure the assistance of an ally, one whom she had first known years ago, and whom she now "providentially," she termed it, thought of.

This old schoolfellow, some years younger than herself, she remembered, had been named Edgcombe. She had married since, but was now a widow. Mrs. Wardour, however, had accidentally been reminded of her by discovering that she was the sister or half sister of the very man whose daughter had won Arthur Wardour's affections.

So without saying a word to her husband upon the subject, the old lady wrote a long and diplomatic letter to her friend, Mrs. Henen, the consequence of which was that Mr. Edgcombe one morning received a note from his half sister, to the effect that she and her daughter Judith were coming down to stay at the cottage for a few days.

"Upon my word, its very cool of Aunt Kate," observed Florence, when her father handed her the note; "we have no spare bedroom, besides, I don't like her or Judith either, they always make mischief wherever they go."

"Still, we can't tell them not to come," objected her father.

"Indeed, I think we can. I will write and tell them so very plainly if you will let me; you know the pain and misery they caused dear mamma, and how when they came to stay with us for a week they actually remained a whole year, and you were obliged to take

mamma and me abroad, and shut up the house before you could get rid of them. And don't you remember, papa, that Aunt Kate had the audacity one day, when mamma wasn't well, to take her seat at the head of the table, when we had some people whom you thought a great deal of, visiting us?"

"I know that you made a scene and turned her out of her seat," replied her father; "which was the worse behaved on that occasion, you or Kate, it would be difficult to determine."

"I should think there need be no difficulty upon that point; if aunt had not taken such an unwarrantable liberty, there would have been no occasion for my rudeness, as she termed it. But that brings us back to the same question again. Papa, if Aunt Kate comes, she will make mischief, and more than that, we have no room for her."

"I should have thought you might have managed to let Judith and her have your room for a few nights," observed her father in a dissatisfied tone.

His daughter flushed crimson. To do this, she herself must either sleep with the servant, or make up a bed on one of the sofas in the dining or drawing-room, and it must be remembered that Miss Edgcombe had been brought up with a very strong sense of her own importance and dignity as a probable heiress, and had until her mother's death always been dressed and waited upon by her own maid; to ask her therefore to submit herself to such discomfort for the convenience of people whom she cordially detested, was trying her amiability a little too much.

After a moment's pause, to get her temper well in hand, she answered calmly:

"Certainly they can have my room, and I will pay Uncle Willie a visit while they remain here. He wanted me to come to town a month or two ago, but I thought it would be so lonely for you here alone."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said her father, hastily. "William Fenton chooses to keep me here on a paltry hundred a year, and I do not choose that he shall have my daughter in his house. I shall be very angry if you write to him on the subject. Your aunt and cousin can have my bed-room. My study must be fitted up for me to sleep in. They won't be here more than a day or two."

Florence made no reply. Her father was evidently determined that his half-sister and her daughter should come, and take up their abode at the cottage if they liked, and since he was willing to give up even his own room for their convenience, what could she do?

But for all that she regarded their arrival with a feeling of dread and terror, such as she could scarcely account for, and despite her father's prohibition, the impulse was strong upon her to go off to her uncle, who loved her as though she had been his own daughter, and whose home he had often told her was never so bright as when she was in it.

Indeed, it was only because she would not leave her father now he was poor that she had not gone to live with her uncle after her mother's death, and, had she done so, she would have been certain of what now was only probable, that he would make her the heiress of his large fortune.

Oh, if she had only followed her first impulse and taken refuge in her uncle's protecting love and care, from what misery she might have been spared.

She did not, however; the feeling that she must take care of her father; that it was her duty to stay with him, triumphed over even her foreboding. Therefore she made ready for the unwelcome guests, who, she felt by some subtle instinct, would try to work mischief, and bring sorrow and trouble into her life.

(To be Continued.)

It is better that joy should be spread over all the day in the form of strength, than that it should be concentrated into ecstasies, full of danger, and followed by reactions.

IMPROVEMENTS IN REGENT STREET.

A SCHEME is on foot for the improvement of Regent Street, which at first sight appears more of a dream than a practical object. The promoters have it in their minds to cover the whole street with a glass roof stretching above the eaves of the houses on either side, thus affording complete protection from rain, while at the same time affording good ventilation.

After dark the huge arcade would be illuminated by electric sunlights placed at regular intervals along the centre of the arch, thereby diffusing a more pleasant and equal light than under ordinary circumstances. One of the greatest defects of Regent Street at present is its macadam pavement, which, in wet weather, produces seas of slush and in dry clouds of dust.

This, also, would therefore be taken in hand for improvement, the object sought being the substitution of some form of pavement which shall be noiseless, clean, safe for horses, and not so liable to fall out of repair.

With a view to render unnecessary the constant breaking up of the street, which is such a nuisance under present circumstances, the gas and water pipes would be carried up the roof, where they could be repaired without difficulty. Such are the salient features of the scheme; what would it cost to carry out? A comparatively small sum, it is said, owing to the cheapness of glass and iron.

A RUSSIAN HERO;

OR,

Marko Tyre's Treason.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNMINDFUL of his own perils and troubles, General Gradowsky lost no time in applying himself to the relief of his life-long friend, the humble Jewish money-lender, with whom we left him at the close of a former chapter.

"Have you no food here, Misdrak?" asked the general, beginning to survey the apartment, after lighting an extra candle.

"Yes, such as it is," replied the Jew. "There is plenty of good tea and crackers, and various other things. As to medicine, there is none at hand, nor do I need any. The fever is evidently broken—"

"And all you now need is warmth and nourishment," interrupted Gradowsky, as he began inspecting the closet which had served Misdrak as a store-room and pantry. "First of all I will brighten up the fire, for there is really a chill in the air for a man in your condition, notwithstanding the season."

Gradowsky soon had a cheerful fire blazing in the little fireplace that occupied one corner of the apartment.

"Where do you get your drinking water?" he asked, as he brought a kettle from the pantry.

"At a well in the rear of the house. But before you step out of doors you had better dress yourself in a suit of my clothes, disguising yourself to resemble me as closely as possible. My garb has some peculiar features, you will notice, and it will not be difficult for you to pass for me!"

Gradowsky acted upon the suggestion, with the aid and direction of Misdrak, and was soon figuring in his new character as much to his own satisfaction and relief as to the Jew's. How busily they chatted!

What hosts of things they had to say to each other!

"You must have a few sips of tea the first thing," said Gradowsky, proceeding to make the beverage, when the kettle had boiled, "and then a toasted cracker, with an egg upon it!"

The Jew stirred a little upon his rude couch, as if beginning to revive with these prospects of assistance.

"I can hardly realise your presence, old friend," he said, feebly. "The hand of Heaven is visible in the circumstance. All last night I was kept in an agony of terror by the robbers, and it seems almost like a change from death to life to have you with me!"

"Our meeting is as pleasant to me as to you, Misdrek," said Gradowsky. "I need a hiding-place quite as much as you need a friend and helper."

"Strange that I never heard of your disappearance, General," pursued the money-lender, as he sniffed the odours of the tea. "And yet, in another sense, there is nothing remarkable about it, as the government does not make arrests of that nature to proclaim them through a trumpet."

"Another thing—my dealings with the world have been very limited of late, and these few confined strictly to business. I was not surprised that you did not call upon me for any of the money I have been handling for you all these years; I knew, of course, that it was merely a drop in your bucket. And yet the sum total of the principal and interest now amounts to a very handsome figure."

"To how much, Misdrek?"

"To over two hundred and fifty thousand roubles, General," answered the Jew. "In the strong box, at the head of my bed, are all the papers relating to these investments, and to my affairs in general. Look well to everything after I am gone, General! You will find that my affairs concern you more closely than you now suppose. You will find my keys in a little bag under my head. I was asking myself before you came, as I lay here so helpless, if I should ever see you again!"

"Indeed? I was thinking of you this very afternoon, Misdrek. My daughter has never been here to see you, I suppose, in regard to these moneys, which she must have found mentioned in my papers?"

"To see me? No, General, but she sent me word to maintain everything upon its present footing until I heard from you—or from her further!"

The general smiled sadly.

"That is as much as to say that the dear girl has never believed me dead," he murmured. "Yet how terribly she must have suffered in all these uncertainties. Would that I could see her! It is almost worth the risking of my life to fly to her on the instant!"

"But this young Captain Tyre will soon inform her of your safety and whereabouts," said Misdrek, as he arose to a sitting posture to sip the cup of tea which was now at his disposal. "I have heard something about Captain Tyre from his men, and have been told that he is a renowned swordsman and a great favourite with the empress!"

"That is all changed now," said Gradowsky, sadly. "Captain Tyre is now a traitor, and will henceforth be hunted like a wild beast, unless he makes his escape from the country!"

"It was nobly done," murmured the money-lender. "He could not have done otherwise, of course. And who knows if he may not yet redeem himself in the eyes of the empress? The measures taken against you, General, are evidently the work of some dastardly villain. The whole record may yet be cleared up to your glory and to Captain Tyre's honour!"

"We will, at least, hope so," returned Gradowsky, as he passed over to the Jew a cracker he had nicely toasted. "In any case, Misdrek, you must get all you can, and make yourself strong against the work or suffering which is to come."

Thus exchanging ideas and sentiments with his old friend, the money-lender made quite a repast of the different articles of food supplied him.

"I certainly feel better," he declared, at the conclusion of his supper, with brightening eyes and reviving mien. "What if I should live, General, after all?"

"Of course you will live, now that I am here to help you," said Gradowsky, as encouragingly as possible. "We ought to get strong as fast as we can, both of us, because we have such urgent need of each other. I think I arrived just as the tide of life was changing in your favour."

"If I should recover my strength," said Misdrek, thoughtfully, "there are lots of important measures we could accomplish together. The house, and especially the vaults beneath us, are full of gold and silver, and money and jewels."

"And yet all those treasures are of very little account to us now," said Gradowsky, smilingly. "If you get well—and I now have great hopes of that mercy—there will be two of us here instead of one solitary man, and it will be curious if we fail to protect ourselves against all comers. You have arms?"

"Plenty of them—a perfect arsenal—only just now I am too weak to use them."

"I am not much stronger than you are, Misdrek," said Gradowsky, "but between us we could make a very good fight. You spoke of being troubled last night, and the night before, by attempts to break in. Is it likely that we shall have another visit from the robbers?"

"I fear it is, General. But it is not necessary to watch for them. We shall waken if they come. Suppose we endeavour to get a few hours' sleep?"

The proposition was sufficiently agreeable to Gradowsky, whose rest had long been broken and spasmodic, and the calm and regular breathing of the two old friends soon announced that they slumbered.

A new day had fully dawned when Gradowsky again opened his eyes, as was shown by the gleams of it that came through the cracks in the shutters.

At first he was bewildered by his surroundings, the events of the previous night appearing to him like the phantasms of a dream; but gradually his thoughts came back to the circumstances in which he was actually placed.

Arising to his elbow he looked inquiringly around, his gaze resting upon the figure of the money-lender.

"Are you awake, Misdrek," he asked.

There was no response—no movement.

"It is no wonder," Gradowsky said to himself. "He was so very weak and weary."

He waited an hour or two until fatigued with his forced inactivity, and then repeated his question in a louder tone than before.

Still there was no answer.

Starting to his feet, the general stepped to the rude couch of Misdrek, bending over him and calling his name.

The same silence and motionlessness was still maintained, and very naturally a sense of alarm entered the soul of the startled guest.

"It is day, Misdrek," he announced, venturing to shake the still figure gently.

Neither voice nor movement responded.

More startled than ever, the general hastened to raise one of the curtains at the end of the apartment, allowing a ray of morning's light to fall upon the features of Misdrek.

The ghastly hue of the countenance, the staring and glazed eyes, the fallen jaw—all told their own story.

A new day had indeed broken, with all its responsibilities, upon the soul of the money-lender.

It was only inanimate dust that now held the general's attention.

"Dead? dead?" he gasped, bending low over the ghastly figure. "It is even so! His expectations and impressions were truer than my hopes. He has gone!"

Arising, with a suppressed sob, he lowered the curtain, to shut out the terrible reality from his gaze, and threw himself, feeble and panting, upon the rude couch from which he had arisen.

He had seen men die in that way before, after a last repast, which seemed to have only ministered to the advent of the death that was coming.

He comprehended that the vitality of the money-lender had been consumed by his long illness, and especially by the lack of care; and the reflections of a few minutes were quite sufficient to convince the lone survivor that the death of Misdrek had been inevitable.

But the death of the Jew only deepened Gradowsky's isolation.

The first shock of his discovery over, his thoughts came back more painfully than ever to his own situation. What was to become of him?

How threatening and critical were the circumstances in which he found himself at that moment!

In Russia, from time immemorial, it has been nearly as dangerous to be found with a dead man as to be actually seen committing a murder.

A sudden knocking at the front door of the house broke in unexpectedly upon the general's gloomy reflections.

He started as if shot.

Evidently someone was demanding admittance—probably a customer, doubtless upon regular business.

All the perils of his situation came rushing over Gradowsky's soul in one mighty torrent.

The knock was repeated impatiently, and then became a prolonged tattoo.

Of course, Gradowsky made no answer—gave no sign of life whatever.

"If police, they will, of course, break in, he reflected. "If private persons, they may possibly conclude the Jew is not at home, and so take their departure."

How anxiously he listened for the solution of the problem.

To his great joy and relief footsteps were soon heard retreating slowly from the door, and Gradowsky comprehended that the importunate visitor was gone.

"Thank Heaven!" was all he could say.

The solitary man was not yet over the effects of this visit, when a similar knocking was heard at the rear entrance of the dwelling.

In this case, as in the other, Gradowsky simply awaited the event in silence.

This visitor also soon wore out his patience, and turned and retreated.

How many such calls were likely to be made in the course of the day? Possibly not many, for Misdrek had for some days declined to make any response to those calling for admittance.

(To be Continued.)

The anti-malarial properties of the willow, in some localities at least, appear to be quite equal to those claimed for the Eucalyptus. In the region of Asia Minor about Ephesus the prevalence of malaria has steadily diminished as the willow has been introduced. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. C. D. Van Lennep, Swedish Consul at Smyrna, this tree is now extensively grown in districts which were comparatively treeless twenty years ago. That it exerts some influence against the fever is probable; and that it strengthens the banks of the streams, furnishes excellent fuel, and supplies good material for farming implements is certain.

About thirty names given to as many objects on the moon within the last quarter of a century are to be replaced by letters and numbers. These names are those of astronomers and their friends who are not very well known, and are not deemed worthy, we suppose, of being commemorated in the appellations of lunar volcanoes, deserts and depressions. The recommendation to drop them comes from a committee of the Selenographical (or moon-mapping) Society, and will be complied with by Dr. Schmidt, of Athens, in his new catalogue of lunar objects.

A PAPER on the particles of iron in the atmosphere was read at a recent meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society by Mr. A. C. Ranyard. When a thousand miles from land he exposed some glycerine plates on the ship's bow, in order to catch any iron dust there might be

in the air; and in this way he secured one particle, which in its longest diameter measures somewhat more than the one hundred and twentieth part of an inch. He wishes that other travellers would test in the same manner for iron in the air over the ocean. Particles of iron have been found in freshly fallen snow at considerable distances from any town, in Sweden. Mr. Ranyard also states that finely divided iron with a structure like that seen in meteorites, occurs quite abundantly in the deep sea clays brought back from many parts of the world.

STRONG TEMPTATION: A Tale of Two Sinners.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"That Young Person," "Why She Forsook Him," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXII.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

For men must work and women must weep.

THE hotel at Baden, which had for some days past been honoured by the sojourn of Mr. Hastings' party, and which he had announced his intention of quitting.

A private sitting-room, handsomely furnished, bright with the cheerful light of a lamp, evidently one of the most expensive apartments of the hotel.

It was past midnight, and yet a man sat reading at the small table as though his need of repose had not yet made itself known. Vere Eastcourt was not thinking in the least of what he read. His mind was busy with a letter received some days before from his sister, Lady Kyrle, urging his return home.

"Our mother pines for you, Vere," wrote Maude, earnestly. "Had I known you meant to forsake her I don't think, even loving Cecil as I do, I could have left her. You are all she has, and you are wandering about without aim or object. You advise my mother to come to us. You know, Cecil and I should rejoice to see her at Lakewood, but she will not be persuaded. Her whole heart clings to Eastcourt. The time was, Vere, when you loved Eastcourt, too. My darling, give over seeking the philosopher's stone. Come home and be happy."

Vere Eastcourt acknowledged, when he read his sister's letter, that he was playing the part of a coward. With everything in life, save one, to make him happy, he was frittering away his time in vain regrets.

The past was past. He knew no time could heal the wound in his heart; but was that a reason for shirking his duty?

For the first time the idea came to him that it might be well for him to marry—to surround himself with new ties. The process of conquering his love seemed slow and painful. If by his own act and deed he gave to a woman the supreme claim on his affections might not it be better?

There was nothing pleasing in the prospect to Vere, only he thought it might be his duty. His mother would be delighted, his grand old name perpetuated, his home once more joyous, and he himself no longer lonely.

Certainly there were reasons in favour of the idea, only to himself it seemed that such a step would be a blight on his honour.

It was past two. All the house had retired to rest. It occurred to Vere at last that he had sat up long enough. Lighting a candle, he opened the sitting-room door, when he was almost stifled by the cloud of smoke which rushed in—thick, blinding smoke, which seemed coming all along the corridor, and appeared to have no end.

Vere took his candle and walked steadily on, the smoke increasing as he went. Then, in the

distance, he saw a red, lurid light creeping up from below. The hotel was on fire.

He never forgot the scene which followed. He found his way to an alarm-bell, and rang it loudly. The attendants of the hotel were soon with him. One by one the sleeping guests were awakened.

The engines were sent for in hot haste. The house was old and built partly of wood. It burned greedily. Very soon the staircase would be impassable.

All that could be done was done. The owner of the hotel was all promptitude and energy. By his orders a long string of flies were collected to take the unfortunate visitors to a place of shelter.

The most extraordinary deshabilles were to be seen. Fellow-feeling seemed to have sprung out of common danger, and people who would have ignored each other the day before were "talking as friends."

The flames rose fast and furious. The engines had not arrived. Probably by morning the "Golden Star" would be a heap of ruins.

Vere Eastcourt stood looking calmly on the scene, thankful for his late hours, which had, perhaps, been the cause of saving many lives. He heard a voice close at his elbow.

"Mr. Eastcourt, I had no idea you were in Baden."

"Rosamond!"

Then, with a flash of memory, he recollected the friends who had brought her to Germany, and that he had met Mr. Hastings the day before on his arrival.

Dorothea, then, was staying at this hotel. Was she safe? If so, why did he not see her among the crowd. Mr. Hastings came up at that moment.

"I am told we all owe our lives to you," he said to Eastcourt, frankly. "I am very grateful to you. Miss Stuart"—to Rosamond—"the carriage is ready. I have come to fetch you and Mrs. Hastings."

"I have not seen Dora. I thought she was with you."

Mr. Hastings did not say he had not seen his wife since the first alarm. When he went to bed he had left her reading in her dressing-room. That was the last he had seen of her.

"We shall find her presently," he said, cheerfully. "People often get scattered in a crowd like this."

He left Rosamond to the carriage, and gave her into Colonel Ellerslie's care. Then he went back.

"Mr. Hastings," came the voice of Henry Marsden, more excited than it had been for many a long day, "where is your wife. I have been looking for her everywhere."

"And I!"

Just then a woman's face appeared at one of the upper windows of the hotel—a white, frightened face, which many of the crowd had often admired during her brief stay at the hotel. A woman's voice rang out on the clear night air.

"Help me! Help!"

"Good heavens! It is my wife—it is Mrs. Hastings! Save her!" he cried, to one or two of the men who were foremost in their efforts at extinguishing the fire. "I will give a hundred—a thousand pounds to anyone who will save her!"

"It is certain death," the men replied, in German. "Were there a chance we would try for the lady's own sake, not for your gold."

Once more that white face looked down on the crowd. Once more those lips moved in supplication. Colonel Ellerslie held back Lord Marsden by force, or he would have rushed madly into what those who understood the odds called certain death.

But there was one whom no one held back, whom no one could have held back had they so striven; who held his life in his own hand, and judged it a slight thing to risk it for the woman he loved.

To save her or to perish with her Vere Eastcourt dashed into the burning house, recking little the fury of the flames, for in his heart there burnt a fierce one, and a stronger pain

possessed him than any mere physical suffering could inflict.

He seemed insensible to the burning heat as he clambered up the tottering staircase. He felt happier than he had ever done since that February morning, which seemed so fearfully long ago, when he had held Dorothea in his arms.

"Have you come to die with me?" she asked.

"To save you if I can," he answered, firmly, "if not to perish at your side."

Those outside had been active, too. A long ladder had been planted against the house, but a dizzy span still separated it from the window. A fireman ran up the steps with a long rope. He tried again and again to throw it in at the window.

At last Vere Eastcourt, by a supreme effort, caught hold of it. He fastened it to Dorothea's waist. The odds still seemed fearful. If she must die it were sweeter to die together; but he would not think of that.

Slowly he lowered her. Anxious moments of agonised suspense, and she is safe in the fireman's grasp. Five minutes more, and Vere, too, is in that friendly grip.

Then he dimly sees Mr. Hastings supporting his wife, and remembers nothing more, for at that sight his strength gave way, and he fell back unconscious.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN IRON RULE.

Let the dead past bury its dead.

DOROTHEA HASTINGS sat in her own pretty boudoir at the Lodge on a bright, sunshiny day in April, with her little child in her arms. Baby fingers had smoothed some of the hues from her face; mother-love had filled some of the aching void in her heart.

She told Maude Eastcourt that she prayed no child might ever call her mother. She was thinking then of her own mother, and the slightness of the tie between them; thinking too, perhaps, of the wreck she had made of her own life, and the utter helplessness to guide another to a fairer, happier destiny than her own. Dorothea felt every word of that wild wish when she uttered it, but when her child was in her arms she rejoiced.

Mr. Hastings cared very little about the matter; he had wished for a son, and did not care for a daughter, still, as he was rich enough to portion three or four Miss Hastings, and a beautiful girl often brings honour to her family, he did not on the whole object to his firstborn. He saw very little of her. Dorothea kept her treasure jealously to herself, and except at the stately christening, when she received the name of Elena, after her mother, it may be doubted whether he ever saw his little daughter.

Nothing had been seen of Vere Eastcourt since the night of the fire. Perhaps the fearful danger she had been in softened Mr. Hastings' heart to Dorothea. He wrote in their joint names a very warm letter of thanks to Vere, and as soon as they got back to the Lodge he took his wife to call upon Lady Isabel, and personally compliment her on her son's bravery. The intimacy with the Park began again, but it was not so charming as the year before, as the only inmate of the stately mansion was its widowed mistress, and Dorothea always felt a pang of reproach when she remembered that but for herself Vere might be with his mother. Mrs. Hastings had not forgotten Colonel Ellerslie's story; she knew that she was Lady Isabel's great niece and the true owner of Lakewood, but she never swerved from her determination not to claim her rights, not even for her child, could Dorothea have ousted Maude and Cecil from the home she loved so well.

On this sunshiny April morning Mrs. Hastings felt almost happy; it was the fourth birthday, counting of course by months, of her little girl, and Dorothea was trying to trace some likeness in the baby features to the father she had so loved. She looked far better now than she had done in London. Her old wild rose bloom had

come back; her smile was less rare, and in her simple morning dress she formed a pleasant picture for the eye to rest on.

Mr. Hastings thought so too as he came in and found the mother and child together. Perhaps in years to come he might soften into quite an indulgent father. At present he certainly betrayed no satisfaction.

"Where is the nurse, Elena?"

She rose and rang the bell quickly. It was her great wish that the child might never be a source of contention between them. The servant came and carried off Miss Hastings. The banker turned to his wife.

"The child grows well, Elena."

"Yes, and she is only four months old to-day."

"Ah, so much as that? Well, we shall find she has made much progress when we come home again."

"What do you mean, Bryan?"

Her face was white. Only on very rare occasions did she address her husband by his Christian name.

"My dear, don't you ever look in the newspapers? Easter has passed a long time, and the first Drawing-room will be on the twenty-eighth."

"Yes."

"I have written to them to have the house all ready, and I shall look in myself next time I am in town. You had better come up next week, then you will be ready for the twenty-eighth."

"I was presented last year, Bryan."

"Exactly. So this year you are able to present others. I have promised Colonel Ellerslie that you will be his wife's sponsor."

"Are he and Rosamond in town?"

"Yes; I saw them both yesterday. She looks very well; quite as childlike as ever."

"I don't think anything could make Rosamond look old. Who would fancy she was only six months younger than I?"

"Anyone who knew your ages. Well, then, you will be ready next week?"

"Yes; if I must go I must, only I should so have liked to stay here. I hope London will agree with baby."

"Elena, are you mad? Of course you cannot take the child, she must stay here. With the staff of nurses I pay half a dozen children might be taken good care of."

"I must take her, Bryan. Do let me. We may stay some weeks in town, and I can't leave her behind."

"You must leave her behind; it's only what every lady of our rank has to do. I daresay you can live down here for a week in July before we go abroad."

"But that is three months off."

"Well."

"I can't leave my child to servants for three months."

"Nonsense."

"Bryan, let me take her. I promise you she shall not be in your way. You need never know she is in the house."

"And how much of your time and attention should I get, I wonder? No, Mrs. Hastings. Wealth has its responsibilities as well as its pleasures. We must receive our friends and go out to them. I married to have a wife and a mistress for my house, not an upper servant."

"Leave me here," she urged. "I can easily stay behind, and you do the visiting for us both."

"A man can't do the honours of his house for himself. No, Elena, you must come, it's no use arguing."

"And if I refuse?"

"You will not refuse."

"I will, I do. I shall stay at the Lodge, unless you let me take my child to London."

"In that case you will have the Lodge to yourself, for I should send my daughter and her attendants to the seaside," and he left the room.

You can guess the sequel. Dorothea yielded. She had no power. The servants were paid with her husband's money. She had none to tempt them to rebellion; with an aching heart and many an injunction to the fine head nurse,

Dorothea left Blankshire to return to the round of gaieties which last season had so palled on her.

The very day after her arrival she received a visit from Mrs. Ellerslie, née Stuart. Rosamond had accepted the colonel very soon after her return to her mother's protection. Evelyn had married a young doctor, and Mrs. Stuart lived with them, so the fifth floor at Madame Hoffman's was vacant, and that lady was seeking a family to combine fine needlework, creamy music and sparkling conversation.

Rosamond looked wonderfully well. She greeted Mrs. Hastings warmly, asked after the baby, and then without waiting for an answer to her inquiry, rushed off into an account of her own affairs.

Apparently she was very happy. She repeated that she was so several times—spoke of the colonel as that dear man, asked after that "charming Mr. Hastings," in short Rosamond married was more gushing and excited than Rosamond single, possessing a home of her own, and ample independence.

She did not need to study the tastes and prejudices of others, and the result was a very great change, which was hardly a change for the better.

"And I am really to present you on the twenty-eighth?" said Dorothea, with a smile. "You should have chosen a grander sponsor than I am, Rosie."

"I would rather have you," replied the bride. "We shall create such a sensation together."

"And your heart is set on making a sensation?"

"My mind is. I don't fancy I have what is called a heart at all, but I get on much better without."

"What are you going to wear?"

"White, of course; it's the correct thing for a bride. The colonel has bought me a lovely set of pearls, dear man."

"It seems so strange to me to think of you as Colonel Ellerslie's wife; he has been just like my father so long."

"I'd rather be an old man's darling than a young man's slave any day, Dora."

"What has become of your late adorer, Lord Maredon? We saw a great deal of him this winter."

"He never was my adorer," a little sullenly. "Oh, Dora," more amiably, "doesn't it seem dreadful that Ery married a man with only two hundred a year. I can't think how she manages."

Dora smiled.

"I fancy love covers a great many deficiencies, Rose."

Rose shook her head.

"It won't feed you or clothe you, nor yet pay your rent."

"But those things don't cost much if people make up their minds to be economical."

"Well, I never could have married a poor man, could you?"

"Yes," blushing deeply, "if I had loved him."

What connection this speech had with the master of Eastcourt we fail to see, but Mrs. Ellerslie replied to it by the question:

"Have you heard anything of Vere Eastcourt?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CALM BEFORE A STORM.

For the soul is dead that slumbers.

THE season was a gay one, and Mr. and Mrs. Hastings had a fair share of its amusements. Dorothea was quite as popular as she had been the year before, and the house in Park Lane was the resort of all whose names were high in rank and fashion.

Quite another set of people surrounded Mrs. Hastings from those who admired Rosamond Ellerslie. Both ladies had been poor, and had gained their entrée into the great world only by a wealthy marriage, but here all connection ceased.

People visited Dorothea who cared nothing at all for her husband—men and women who had the sense to read him truly, yet for his wife's sake counted him among their friends. In Grosvenor Gardens all was different. With women Rosamond could never be a favourite. The idlest, gayest of the sons of fashion were her constant attendants; flattery and flirtations were common to her as her daily bread, but very little real regard. She openly slighted the steady, middle-aged people who had been the colonel's intimates, and was cold and haughty to the few tried friends who, out of real liking for her husband, yet came to see him.

Rosamond and Dorothea never clashed. They were spoken of as friends. Mrs. Hastings certainly rarely appeared at Grosvenor Gardens, but then Mrs. Ellerslie was very often in Park Lane. Tastes and sympathies, habits and characters totally different, there was yet this similarity, both had sinned in perjurying themselves at the Lord's own altar; both had loved the same man.

Mr. Hastings spent a great deal of his time at the bank. There could have been nothing wrong with his affairs since he launched out into fresh expenses, and never denied his wife any luxury money could procure, yet the banker's face often looked strangely grave. He was becoming more and more irritable. He never confided in his wife, and having no love for him she did not see by instinct the sore trouble written on his brow.

Towards the end of June Mrs. Hastings issued cards for a grand ball by her husband's orders. They had had one or two similar entertainments on a smaller scale, but this was to be emphatically the one greatly surpassing any other display of their hospitality. No expense was spared. The ball-room was given up to the first florist in London, who converted it into a kind of fairy land. The supper was from a French artiste. Two hundred invitations were issued, and nearly all were accepted.

Dorothea herself troubled little about the arrangements; her entertainments always did succeed. She supposed this would be no exception. Mr. Hastings, on the contrary, was in a fever of anxiety, especially until the replies had been received, then he grew calmer, simply urging upon his wife again and again that she was not to spare money, as he wished their ball to be one to be remembered.

Dorothea had her own anxieties just then. She would far rather have been alone in Blankshire than here in Belgravia at its gayest, for the last accounts from the Lodge had not been quite satisfactory. The head nurse had deemed it necessary to call in the doctor's experience to support her own, and though his verdict had been, "There was no ground for Mrs. Hastings to be uneasy," Mrs. Hastings was very uneasy indeed.

She counted the days and hours till the ball was over. Her husband had promised that very soon after the house in Park Lane should be closed, and she return to the Lodge and her child.

The morning of the ball arrived—a lovely day in the first week of July. Dorothea came down to breakfast in a pretty white dress, trimmed with pink.

Very fair and graceful she looked as she took her place behind the tall silver coffee pot. Her husband, crushing a letter he had been reading into his pocket, turned to her with some common-place remark. She hardly heard him.

"How strange it is there is no letter for me. I told Ross to write every day, until baby was quite well again."

"The child is probably quite well, and that is the reason of her silence."

"Perhaps the servants have forgotten the letters."

"No. I have had mine. Don't be so fanciful, Elena, had anything been wrong you would have heard. What do you suppose people who have half a dozen children do, if you make so much fuss over your one?"

Mrs. Hastings sighed, but she said no more.



[A BONE OF CONTENTION.]

She had learnt the lesson her husband once said he meant to teach her—that he was master. Very, very seldom did she rise against his will, and then only to find resistance futile.

It was a brilliant ball, the success of the season. The fairest faces, the proudest names, were there, and among all, Dorothea moved as an equal. Dorothea, who less than two years before had lived with her mother on an annual pittance of a hundred and twenty pounds. Rosamond was there with her husband, and even the fond old colonel's eyes were opened that night. His wife's flirtations, her reckless manner, her utter defiance of every social prejudice, dawned on him first at this ball.

Poor Colonel Ellerslie; he thought he had married an angel. Alas! he found out his mistake, and as she watched Mrs. Ellerslie's amusements, graceful Lady Kyrle returned thanks to heaven that her matchmaking had failed, and her girlhood's friend had not become her sister.

Sir Cecil and Lady Kyrle had renewed their intimacy with the Hastings' on their arrival in town. They were very late in leaving Lakewood, for it was quite June before they took up their abode in their town house, and they did not follow the banker's theory as to people of rank, for they brought with them Master Cecil Kyrle, who certainly had not passed the age of five weeks when he made his first appearance in the great metropolis.

Maude and Dorothea were friends, yet the former never guessed the secret of Mrs. Hastings. To Dora it was a strange pleasure to feel that Maude and she were blood relations, so the Kyrles were often in Park Lane, and Maude and Dora drove together, and Mrs. Hastings was no stranger to Cecil Kyrle, Jun., who one day would be master of the place which had been her father's home.

"Cecil," said Maude to her husband, "I never saw Dora look so well. I think she is the loveliest woman in London."

They had just entered the ball-room where Mrs. Hastings stood receiving her guests. Cer-

tainly she was looking grandly beautiful, yet something in her face reminded Sir Cecil for the first time of a sad girlish face he had gazed on in Madame Lecomte's album. He sighed.

"It is not a happy face, Maudie."

The ball lasted late. People seemed loath to leave the fairy scene at last. Dorothea and her husband stood alone. The last carriage had driven off.

"Elena," said Mr. Hastings, with more consideration than he often showed his wife, "you must be very tired. Do not wait up, I am going into the city early, and I shall be at the bank all day."

"Good-night," she answered, gently. "I do feel very tired. I don't envy you, Bryan."

For one moment his arm encircled her waist, and his lips touched hers. Then he opened the door for her, and stood at the foot of the stairs watching her as she slowly mounted them.

"Annie," she said, kindly, to the maid, as she undressed her, "we are going home soon. You will be glad of that?"

Annie, who was a Blankshire girl, smiled in pleasure.

"You will be glad too, ma'am," she replied, respectfully. "I'm sure you must often long for the dear little girl."

"Don't call me early," were Dorothea's last words. "I am so tired, let me sleep."

So it must have been almost noon when she woke up and saw her maid standing at her bedside holding a tray temptingly spread with breakfast. Dorothea eagerly glanced at it, and then leaned back disappointed.

"Are there no letters, Annie?"

There was a quiver in her voice; a moisture in her eyes; the maid understood.

"James didn't give any, ma'am."

Mrs. Hastings drank the coffee quickly, but waved away the delicate toast with an impatient hand.

"I must get up, Annie, at once, and don't you think there might have been a letter and James have forgotten it?"

"I'll see, ma'am."

She was gone some time. She came back with an eager step.

"There was no letter this morning, ma'am, but there was one yesterday. Master opened it."

Quick as lightning there came to Dorothea the remembrance of the way her husband had dismissed her inquiries yesterday. She started up.

"I know there is something the matter. I am sure of it."

"Why not go yourself and see, ma'am?" suggested the maid, kindly. "Many's the time the master has run up to London from the Lodge. It's nothing of a journey. We might go now and yet be back for dinner."

Dorothea caught at the idea. She let herself be dressed in feverish haste. By the time she was ready, the carriage was at the door, and with the maid still at her side, she drove to Victoria Station. There was an express just starting for Blankton.

"Take two tickets, Annie," said her mistress, giving her her own purse; "don't leave me alone."

And the faithful girl never forgot the look of despair on her lady's face as the express train whirled them through the fields and lanes, bright with summer beauty. Annie talked of that journey afterwards as the saddest hour of her life.

There was no fly at the station, and they walked to the Lodge, using the same footpath as Rosamond Stuart had once walked up as she awoke Mr. Hastings' jealousy. Dorothea leant heavily on her maid's arm; she seemed like one recovering from a long illness.

"Be brave, ma'am, we're nearly there," as they entered the Lodge gates.

Mrs. Hastings made no answer; she only clung closer to Annie, but when the winding path at last showed them the house with its white gables and flower covered walls, a great sob escaped Annie. Every blind was down, but Mrs. Hastings never dreamed of what this might mean.

(To be Continued.)



[ON THE HIGH SEAS.]

LADY VIOLET'S VICTIMS.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

And o'er the fairest troop of captured joys
Breathes pallid pestilence.

THE actual command of the "Ariadne" in time devolved upon the mate, for the captain, a little blue-eyed Welshman, had been hopelessly intoxicated ever since the ship left harbour, and divided his time between a brandy bottle and a series of vague but tearful allusions to his lost Maria, a being of enigmatical existence and doubtful fate.

He was nearly insane by this time, and the mate, with the cool philosophy of a practised hand, had calculated that he would be raving in three days, provided he did not kill himself in the meantime—a more than probable contingency.

The expectancy of shortly receiving a fearful doom at the hands of some of the ship's crew became at last a certainty, for Lionel was aroused from his sleep the night after his conversation with Sir Hugh as to the dangers threatening him, by the figure of the first mate, an American, standing by his side, cutlass in hand, with a pair of glittering revolvers in his belt.

"Turn out, my lad, if you value your life," the sailor cried; "there's mischief on. Wake up, I say. Why he sleeps as sound as a door-post."

"Halloa! what's up?" said Lionel, starting and rolling out of his hammock, only to catch sight by the dim gleam of the lantern of the contour of the tall, thin figure of the first mate.

Lionel, but half awakened, stared in amazement at this apparition.

"Why, what on earth has happened? Is

anything seriously the matter with the captain?" asked Lionel, making sure his revolver was safe.

"Matter enough, stranger, to send every mother's son of us into perdition!" cried the flaxen-haired giant; "hang me if everything hasn't gone wrong with me since I sold that blessed caul for five dollars."

Then he added sotto voce, with a fervour approaching piety, the turn of events inclining him to superstition:

"If ever I get off this vessel I'll have that caul back, if I live on bilge water and dried leather for three months."

At this moment a confused sound of trampling feet and blaspheming voices, now high, now low, came down the companion way to the listening ears of the two men.

"That's what the matter, stranger," said the mate, briefly; "a pack of demons let loose on this unlucky ship. Do you know how to fight, Britisher? There'll be fighting on soon, as sure as my name is Josiah P. Smiler!"

"I daresay I've not quite forgotten the noble art of self-defence," answered Lionel, smiling a little at the American's emphatic earnestness.

"Wal, I reckon you oughter be big-licks at the business," Josiah P. Smiler continued, glancing approvingly at the stalwart form of the young Englishman. "And the swell," indicating with a jerk of his thumb the recumbent form of Sir Hugh Allerton, "air he a bruiser too? They due say that some o' these dandy loafers of your country hev real grit, and he wasn't born in a hay loft, I reckon."

Lionel undertook to vouch for his friend's fighting capacity, and the Yankee continued as coolly as if he were a thousand miles away from the slightest token of danger in any form:

"Wal, boys, sling yourselves together and rig. You needn't trouble to put on your dress clothes; they ain't calkulated to hev any visable effect against the bullets. You'll find a weapon in the corner," and so saying the phlegmatic Josiah P. Smiler, cutlass, revolvers and all, dis-

appeared up the companion ladder, chewing an imaginary straw.

Lionel shook Sir Hugh, who had slept on through this dialogue unmoved.

"Wake up, Sir Hugh, wake up. There is danger above. The hour you foretold has come at last, and we must have a fight for life."

"Cutlasses!" muttered Sir Hugh, half aroused, "and die hard; that's what somebody said in a book."

"We must dress at once," muttered Lionel, "or they'll be at our throats. You have gold and they know it!"

Sir Hugh turned sleepily to the other side, such is the effect of ennui and sea air after several weeks on the ocean.

"Tell him I'm out of town, Simpkins," he murmured, his dreaming thoughts being just at that moment occupied with a vision of his old London chambers, his valet, and the usual impatient creditors in the background.

The noise on deck increased, and Lionel redoubled his efforts with better success. Sir Hugh awoke with a start.

"What's happened? What's all this row about?" he asked.

"I don't know," replied Lionel, hurriedly. "Get up and dress. The mate has been down here, and says there's some fighting on!"

"I thought it would come to this," said the baronet, putting on his coat. "What's the time?"

Lionel consulted his watch, and found it to be two o'clock.

"Deuce of a nuisance too, in the middle of the night," yawned Sir Hugh; "they might have waited till daylight."

The noise of angry voices waxed fiercer, and the tramping of feet grew louder. The two friends were now attired, and arming themselves with revolvers, sprang up the companion ladder on to the deck.

And here a sight met their gaze sufficient to blanch the stoutest hearts. Stretched full length on the deck in the midst of a sickening

pool of blood, was the lifeless body of a man they recognised as that of the boatswain of the ill-starred vessel, a lively, good-humoured fellow, who had been a special favourite with them.

The wan, pale face of the dead man upturned to the light of the rising moon was still racked with the last throes of the death agony, and the staring eyes and gaping jaws, and a hideous gash on the forehead, made up a presentment of terrible realism.

"Good heavens! the man's murdered!" said Sir Hugh, grasping Lionel's arm.

Around the corpse was gathered a flopping, gesticulating mob of sailors, their ruffianly countenances rendered more repulsive by the excited working of their features, as they filled the still night air with their shouts and oaths.

In their midst stood the man Jones, sullen and defiant, with a blood-stained cutlass in his hand, and his swarthy arms bare. Opposite to this group stood a smaller one, composed of Smiler the mate, the second mate, a little, red-haired Welshman, Ben, the black cook, the carpenter, and two or three more.

Sir Hugh and Lionel ranged themselves by these, and a murmur of suppressed joy ran through this smaller group as they saw the two young men approach.

The captain was nowhere visible, but from the cabin issued now and again unearthly yells, interspersed with demonical ravings of anything but a lucid nature, which told of his whereabouts and condition.

It was a strange unearthly scene. All around lay the calm ocean motionless and still, with only the sea-gulls whirling over the masts of the "Ariadne," and the shadows of the passionless moon, undimmed by cloud or vapour, resting on the broad bosom of the ocean, while on that speck on its immensity, the "Ariadne," raged a storm of hatred and fury.

The fitful glare of the ship's lanterns shed a lurid light around, and revealed the mass of dark, desperate faces on deck, hideous in their intensity; full of fell design; the smaller group (headed by the Yankee) not a whit less resolute and determined, but without the emboldening instinct of desperation depicted on the faces of the opposing group.

Between them lay the reeking corpse of the murdered man; his mutilated face upturned to Heaven as if in mute appeal for justice.

Josiah Smiler stood at the fore, revolver in hand, calm and cool as ever. He was not a reckless man, but he knew his danger full well, and his sharp eyes followed every movement of the gang, ready to detect or intercept any sudden surprise.

There was a momentary hush, for the mate was about to speak, and his stentorian voice commanded silence.

"Now, look'ee here, lads," he said, in a calm, resolute tone, his fingers toying significantly with the deadly weapon he held, "you all know me. There was a cuss once who kinder thought he knew this child, after a slight acquaintance of five minutes and a half, but it was the unluckiest error that cuss ever made in his life, for his family had to see to his burying next day. Now, don't you go buttin' your heads against the same unfortunate error, and put other folk to onnessary trouble. I hev something to say, my lads, and that concerns you all. I ain't given to wasting breath. The captain's sick under, and I'm in command. The boatswain's murdered in cold blood, and you're all a mutinous set o' rascals. I saw him ripped, and Hercules Jones is the man that did it. Now, lads, I've passed the word once to put Hercules Jones in irons, and not a sailor budged. Now, that's irritation. I give you two minutes to think it over. If you obey duty I'll pass over the rest, but I give you warning, my lads, on the word of a man that takes no more account of human life than if it were a bad egg flip, that if Hercules Jones ain't put in irons in two minutes' time from now I'll send him something that'll land him in another port than the one we're makin' for. I will, as I'm a man."

Not a sailor offered to obey the mate's com-

mand. Hercules grinned insolently as he muttered, snapping his fingers in the air: "So much for a Yankee's threats."

"We'll soon see which is stronger," another sailor cried, standing close to Jones, and giving a sort of signal to the rest, which they understood to be the commencement of battle.

Sir Hugh instantly raised his revolver and fired at Jones with steady aim. He was a finished shot, and wounded the giant dangerously in the arm just below the elbow, so that the man dropped his revolver, and with a fierce oath, fell on the deck like a log.

"Cutlasses!" roared the mate, to those on his side, "and let them have it," and with a desperate plunge, Josiah Smiler made his first charge on the enemy.

By dint of severe fighting they kept the half-drunken crew at bay. Bullets whizzed right and left, and the flash of steel gleamed in the moonlight. Watching his opportunity, Lionel, seizing a hatchet, made for the boat, and assisted by the carpenter, succeeded in loosening her. Flames were now issuing from the burning deck of the "Ariadne," and cast a wild light over sea and sky. The hoarse shrieks of the crew; the crackling fires among the timbers, presented a never-to-be-forgotten scene.

"Make for the boat, Sir Hugh," Lionel whispered, as he discharged his revolver for the last time, "and we shall yet be saved. They have been at the rum, and are now nearly all too drunk to be dangerous."

"The 'Ariadne' is in flames," replied Sir Hugh, "and they will all be burnt alive. A fire broke out in the cabin about ten minutes ago. Come Lionel, no time must be lost if we are to escape."

A few of the miserable wretches, staggering about the deck, endeavoured to frustrate their design, and waved to their companions for aid, but in vain; the two determined men bent on escaping from the ship were too rapid for them, and were soon rowing in the darkness with swift and steady strokes far from the burning "Ariadne," that now enveloped in sheets of flame looked like some lingering wreck of a burning world, with the shrieks of the dying appealing for aid in vain.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONSTANCE AND APHRA.

My desolation does begin to make a better life.

DURING the four years' absence of Sir Hugh Allerton and his brother in Australia, life at the Hall had been continued in its usual conditions in an apparently unbroken calm.

Lady Constance now inhabited the upper rooms, and waited on by Meredith, seemed a mere passive machine in their hands—a prey to melancholy and despair. But no further derangement of her reason could be feared; her intellect was strengthened by philosophical studies, and though she remained nearly always alone, and was spoken of as a nervous, eccentric person generally, one hope sustained and comforted her, that she might in time be restored to her husband.

Lady Constance resolutely refused to enter into gaieties or festivities of any kind, and it suited Lady Violet's purpose to ignore her sister's existence. There was always the fear of Lionel's re-appearance to compromise matters, and when Sir Hugh, in his letters, alluded to his own probable speedy return to England, but that Hargrave preferred the wild, untrammelled life of the bush, and could not be induced to think of leaving Australia, Lady Violet always smiled exultingly to herself, as if nothing more were to be dreaded. For the possible contingency of Hargrave's return was itself a terrible dread.

Lady Violet did not altogether comprehend her sister. She believed that Lady Constance was mentally really very little above an idiot (but then idiots have unmisgivable rights and claims), and here she remained still in the flesh, a victim of wrong-dealing and treachery. Her

death, which Lady Violet once calculated on as certain, seemed farther off than had been expected, and to shut her up for ever in an asylum, so sane and calm as she now appeared, was obviously impossible.

Few could have recognised in the stealthy woman who wore green glasses, and escaped from everyone's way, the haughty Meredith, who had defied Lionel in the cottage. Yet here she was, respectful, cautious, and clever, the close attendant of Lady Constance, whom she was ordered to carefully watch, and whose actions she had to report on daily.

For Lady Constance had no hope of escape from here; neither, apparently, did she desire to leave her home. In fact a shuddering terror seized her at the thought of contact with strangers and fresh scenes. Constitutionally timid, her suffering had produced a longing for perfect calm and the luxury of repose. She would rest on her couch for hours in a kind of dream, resembling that of a person optimised and stunned, waiting as it seemed for some hour delayed by destiny.

She bore her imprisonment cheerfully, and even with a Spartan endurance that baffled all efforts to undermine. She declared she preferred a life of pure contemplation and solitude—yes, and indolence; that she did not feel equal to receive visitors; had always detested grandeur, pomp, conventionalism, and would live her own life, in her own way, alone and unmolested.

A curious existence for a wealthy young lady of elegant surroundings, but no argument affected her; resolute she remained in her purpose, solitary as a rose in a desert in which there is not even a sun.

"You say I have been mad," she would answer, in reply to her father and Lady Violet's questions. "You have treated me as a lunatic, when I was but delirious from brutality and neglect! Well, then, people would inevitably shun me. Think of me as dead to the world, and let me live my own existence in isolated quietude."

So in time they left her to herself, but the girl, spite of her weakness, still had a purpose. She would remain here for four years, and at the end of that time leave England for Australia; some subtle instinct prompted the thought, and her courage rose at the prospect. But in the meantime an inner voice told her to wait. She was very weary, she had had her youth crushed and broken, but there was a future!

Whence come these mysterious promptings that cheer the wretched under such grievous circumstances? It is the sweet haze we look for in the darkness; it is the tiny rift in the cloud; the glittering glow-worm in the wood; the crystal star in the blackened firmament—hope—that allied with her delicate perceptions almost pointed to a fair certainty. She felt herself still loved, but only as a memory. She knew that the man she had married and from whom she had been torn was gifted above all others in his noble gravity; his generous soul; his faithful truth; that he mourned for her with the same steady constancy and unfaltering fidelity as ever.

And he might return! They had told her he was false, mean, and venal, when she herself in that trance had felt his tears on her brow, and his kisses on her lips.

It was spring-time, and crossing the splendid lawns surrounding the Earl of Harrington's mansion, one came upon lovely patches of pale spring flowers along the shrubbery edge, and in the garden beds. Tender rays of light seemed to fall upon and irradiate the earth after the long sleep of winter, and Lady Constance found her pleasant walks about the park and plantation her most agreeable distraction.

Her chief pleasure consisted in relieving the necessities of the poor. She took the deepest interest in their welfare, and would often be seen carrying wine and food to the poor people inhabiting the cottages surrounding the park.

As she passed through the great gates of the Hall, the dogs barking furiously to be allowed to accompany her, she looked almost as youthful and fair as on that memorable day in the

past when she had dared to wed Lionel, but something else was now written on her expression; the deepest recesses of her heart had been wrung with pain, and this was interpreted in sweetness and thoughtfulness.

She wore a pale straw-coloured hat, that rested on her lovely hair as if it had blown there, and a soft, grey-coloured silk dress, trimmed with darker tints, completed her toilette; she carried a large and somewhat inelegant umbrella to shade her face from the sun, for it was May time, and Lady Constance loved to linger hours in the woods gathering wild flowers under the elms, and letting the long boughs of aged trees surround her as a canopy.

Oscar, her favourite hound, had now sprung from his kennel, and licking her hand mutely implored her notice.

"Come, Oscar," she said, bending to pat the faithful dog's head, and putting a small basket into his mouth, "and to-day we'll go to the village to visit poor Aphra."

Lady Constance had tended the suffering gipsy with the tenderness that was native to her ever since the evening they had found Aphra outside the tent, faint and weary from loss of blood from a deep wound in her side—"she had stabbed herself," she said, "and she'd come to die near Lionel's home." The gipsy had lingered for a long time, but the wound had not proved fatal, and now she had returned to her tribe in the village, where Lady Constance often went to visit her to take her little delicacies from the Hall.

Aphra never saw Lionel again after that fatal day on which she told her history. Darratt had been good to her; perhaps he thought he had had a hand in the parting; but Lionel's name was never more mentioned between them, but often in her sleep it had escaped her lips.

Aphra's mind was unbinged, she muttered to herself and wandered in desolate loneliness about the heath as of old calling for Lionel, and praying for his safe return.

Some instinct had drawn Lady Constance to the sick woman, and the gipsy would murmur fragmentary remembrances of Lionel's boyhood—simple tales, but full of meaning to the earl's daughter, who still loved him, and whose greatest happiness now remained in interpreting the gipsy's histories of him according to her own fancy.

Nothing distasteful; nothing low or mean could be associated with that poet's soul. Aphra would show her incomplete sketches of landscapes that had been traced by a boy's hand as he sat outside the cottage door on summer evenings, and endeavoured to give a language to his thoughts in painting; an old violin was also found among Aphra's treasures, which Lionel had bought for seven and sixpence in a small shop in some country town, and had tried but vainly to awake to sound.

As Lady Constance was leaving the gates of the park, followed by Oscar, her sister, Lady Violet, riding a magnificent thoroughbred, turned the corner, and reining up her horse, said:

"Ah! you're taking advantage of this delicious morning for a stroll; going to the wood as usual, I suppose. I've just returned from the Post Office. I have had a letter from Australia."

Lady Constance blushed faintly to the delicate hue of a rose petal.

"Yes, and Sir Hugh writes word he's had almost enough of it, what with sheep farming and sheep shearing and bush rangers and savages; a gentleman of refined taste, you know, must hate that sort of thing, besides, he was nearly murdered last month."

Lady Constance was totally unaware that Sir Hugh and Lionel were together. She answered indifferently:

"So he is coming back, I suppose?"

She longed to ask if by any chance he and Lionel had met, but knew it would be mere waste of breath to question her sister.

"Yes, and much richer than when he went out. It seems he has made the acquaintance of

a gentleman he alludes very frequently to in his letters—a man of wealth—a splendid fellow—Baron Mivar; curious name, is it not? This Baron and he seem firm friends, in fact they talk of arriving in England together in a month or two."

"Indeed!" assented Lady Constance, little thinking of connecting Baron Mivar with Lionel, "and will they come here?"

"Oh! yes, at once, they will be our guests for a time."

Lady Constance put her hand on the horse's bridle.

"One word, Violet, one word before you go. Was there nothing said of—of him?"

"Of Lionel Hargrave, that landscape gardener, who took our bribe and went out in a sailing vessel from Liverpool? Constance, do you dare mention his name?"

"He is my husband," the unfortunate girl muttered, covering her face and turning away.

"But he is gone, effaced; he is dead to you for ever!"

The victim was here betrayed into a foolish outbreak.

"And suppose I go to Australia and seek him, even as Evangeline sought Gabriel, far and wide. She waited long, but at last they met, and I will find him. Love's eyes see clear and far."

Lady Violet struck her sister's hand sharply with the jewelled handle of her riding whip; the blow raised a weal, crimson as blood.

"You would not be permitted. We have ready and diplomatic means, my Constance, at hand of preventing that step. Do not try it."

"No, I will submit," she answered, conscious of her mistaken impulse.

"Yes, that is best, and wait. You may approve of Baron Mivar—a hero, a prince, with just that sort of pleasant wickedness which flashes agreeably, and a proud silence that stirs romance. I see it all. You must wear silk dresses and diamonds again, and complete his conquest."

Lady Violet was thinking how her sister could be kept away from Sir Hugh, as he thought her dead.

"I must talk to papa," she muttered, as she waited for Lady Constance's answer.

"I think, Violet, this Baron will have more charm for you. You never really cared for Sir Hugh."

"We are engaged," said Lady Violet. "I don't preach my feelings to the world," and she turned away laughing.

Lady Constance watched her a moment as she slowly cantered down the avenue.

Little did Lady Violet imagine the ruse the two friends had planned to mislead and deceive her. Sir Hugh had his doubts of her sincerity and goodness considerably shaken by Lionel's revelations, but he, with Lionel, firmly believed Lady Constance dead.

"We shall see," whispered Lady Constance, lifting her hand, which ached from the blow, as her sister slowly faded from view.

She turned and passed the delicately branching foliage, tears welling in her eyes. She walked quietly towards the village, her heart throbbing with anger and disdain.

Aphra was sitting in the sunlight, a scarlet hood over her hair, and some knitting by her side. Since her severe illness her sight had been a good deal impaired.

"Aphra," said Lady Constance, touching her gently. "I have come to read to you a little, and I've brought you a few things in this basket. See, Oscar has put it down by your side."

She was still trembling from recent excitement, and the gipsy detected the tremor in her tones.

"You are so good to me, my dear young lady," Aphra answered, rising and going towards the tent, while Lady Constance followed her, and throwing herself into a small chair, sobbed as if her heart would break.

"What troubles you?" asked Aphra, gently, kneeling by her side.

"I fear they will take my liberty from me,"

Lady Constance murmured, recalling some muttered threats of her sister. "Tell me, Aphra, do you believe Lionel is dead?"

The gipsy, still kneeling by her side, lifted her hands above her head, and as though entreating a blessing, said:

"No, dear lady, no, but he believes you are."

"I!" repeated Lady Constance, in anguish.

"Ah, yes, he saw me in the coffin. He took his farewell of me there; and they would have me think he took their gold, and with that cheap and wretched payment left me for ever. Aphra, I want to go away from here, to Australia. I long to find him again. I know he is waiting for me; he has no one to care for him there. He will perhaps hasten his death hoping to join me above, when I am well and living. This life is a shadow—a mockery. When I close my eyes visions pass before me of Lionel: he is reading scraps of my handwriting; he is praying to me; sometimes I even fancy he is dying in some dreary hut, alone. Oh, Aphra, this inaction is not only cruel, but fatal. If I could carry out my purpose of finding him I should live."

"Poor thing," murmured Aphra, gently, thinking how this young girl's youth had been blighted by that one rash act of hers—the long hidden crime. Aphra would have given anything at that moment to have undone the past. "The time will come," she said, "when you will meet again, when, I cannot say; but it is thus I read destiny: troubles are near you; they will be hard to bear, but wait with patience, my dear young lady, and before this time next year you will hear his voice."

"Will he return then?" asked Lady Constance, as the gipsy stopped and gasped, as if for breath.

"Oh, yes," the gipsy answered, covering her face with her hands, "and I shall not see him—my Lionel—my son. We parted in anger. It is more bitter than death."

"Aphra, was it anger that made you stab yourself? Did you want him to stay in England?" she asked, touching the gipsy's arm.

"It was not that—it was not that. You would despise me if you knew, but I am tired of life at last."

"Have you injured him?" asked Lady Constance, looking searchingly into the gipsy's face.

Aphra's lips moved, but made no reply, and Lady Constance still kept her eyes fixed on hers.

"Yes," she said, at last; "I was his enemy from his infancy."

"You?"

Aphra's deep sunk eyes, now almost blind and dim, moistened, and she turned her head away.

"Do you not despise me? Do you not shun me? Yes, take away your hand. I have destroyed you both."

Lady Constance withdrew her hand. She felt the same shuddering aversion to the gipsy that Lionel had experienced. Aphra rose to her feet.

"If Lionel comes to me again, he shall have the truth. I swear it."

"Too late," moaned the earl's daughter. "He will never return to us. It is I who must seek him."

"No," said Aphra; "he loves you still, and he will return."

Glancing round they saw Meredith. Had she overheard these last words? Lady Constance paled to the lips.

"I have come for you, my lady. Your father and sister request your return."

Lady Constance yielded to an unguarded burst of anger.

"Tell them that I am free; that I shall not come. I shall please myself about my return."

"Can you battle with fate?" said the gipsy, softly. "Go; be wise; a happy New Year will be yours," and moving aside, she began looking over some old books and papers.

"The earl expressed a wish," said Meredith,

"that you limit your walks to the Park or grounds of the Hall. He objects to your acquaintance with—with gipseys, my lady."

Lady Constance quivered and shrank like one seeing a dimly lighted path in which red hot lava may be concealed.

"And if I prefer to disobey?"

"You have a bad memory, my lady; recollect the past."

"I do," said Lady Constance, and going towards Aphra, she held out her hand, and as the gipsy clasped it, she looked imploringly at her. "I will be happy to follow my father's wishes," she whispered softly.

Aphra, going towards the door of the tent, watched them as they walked in silence towards the Hall. As they entered the earl met them, and leading Lady Constance into the library, said:

"I have been warned you are thinking of seeking that man I have banished to Australia. You are now found in conversation with the woman who calls herself his mother. You will therefore remain in your apartments for the next three months, and not be permitted to quit the grounds. You will take your walks when we please, accompanied by Meredith. I regret this harshness, but it is inevitable."

"You mean to keep me a prisoner until my sister's marriage with Sir Hugh Allerton, whom you informed I was dead. Take care, sir, some heavy judgment will overtake you for your cruelty and injustice. I demand some other attendant in the place of Meredith."

"Why? Because you could bribe and cajole, is that not so? Meredith is unassailable."

"She is silent or else insulting."

"A mere bugbear of your imagination. After your sister's marriage with Sir Hugh, I intend to travel. You will accompany me, and if I find you are sane and docile, you can have full enjoyment and your liberty, but for the present, strict seclusion, and above all obedience."

Lady Constance appeared plunged into a kind of stupor. She longed to throw off the yoke, and yet it seemed slowly, year by year, more thoroughly to fetter her.

What struck the earl in his tyrannous egotism as perverse wilfulness was nothing more than the promptings of invisible influences. He was very anxious Lady Violet should marry Sir Hugh Allerton. He fancied his home would be more agreeable without that exigante but always exquisite presence.

(To be Continued.)

TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND MECHANICAL TRAINING.

WHAT is more discouraging to a man of sound sense and determined energy than to know that he has men about him who are continually pulling in opposite directions? Yet how cognisant are we that such negativeness, if I may use the expression, does exist, and that, too, among the educated as well as the uneducated classes.

Masters of shops and factories would object to taking a boy in their employ without obliging him to stay a specified time. This term should certainly be long enough to enable a master to derive some benefit from the boy to compensate the former for the bad and spoiled work of the latter. At the expiration of this period the boy will be so far developed that should he choose to enter a technical school, he will be better fitted to imbibe those professional tenets which go to polish the engineer; and let the scholar ever bear in mind that the higher the polish the better will he withstand, in after years, the corrosive attacks necessarily incident to his career.

At all times it is a matter of serious consideration for one to choose the proper shops in which to place a boy, in order that he may have ingrafted into his mind those thoroughly practical ideas which will serve him advantageously in the future.

One of the greatest evils that can befall a youth who has the ambition to become a prominent mechanic, is to be placed in contact with, to say nothing of being under the tutorage of, an impracticable man, one who is full to overflowing with little, narrow-minded whims, who is wanting in dignity, who is never prompt, and who is incapable of placing before his men a class of work which can be understood and appreciated by the public at large.

To procure for a boy, or young man, a thoroughly practical education, first make a close investigation as to the best shops in which to apprentice him. Then pick out the foreman mechanic, whose high qualifications have secured him his important position in the works; place your boy under his charge, and you may rest assured that when the boy has served his term of apprenticeship he will have received a far better knowledge of his trade than if he had been allowed to select a shop for himself, and serve a short apprenticeship, without having received any practical instruction.

Under proper supervision a boy will generally profit both himself and his employer. Reverse the case, and the young man will almost invariably turn out to be a miserable botch and a nuisance, wherever he may chance to be employed.—Ed.]

THE BARONESS OF THE ISLES.

CHAPTER XXIV.

At the time appointed, Ivar, clothed in a monkish habit, was conducted to the abbot's private room.

The abbot was alone, before a low fire, in a great stuffed chair. He arose at Ivar's entrance and came forward to greet him, motioning Eustacius to retreat. Then, when the two were left together, the abbot drew Ivar to a seat beside him upon a cushioned settle, and said to him:

"You have changed greatly since I last saw you, Ivar. The good knight Ranulph, my brother, loved you as if you had been his son after the flesh. I would gladly have taken you in your childhood, if Ranulph had permitted me, to bring you up in the service of Him, even as Ranulph bred you to arms. You have won your spurs as knight; you are renowned, honoured, beloved by a noble-born lady. Why then do you desire to renounce the world?"

"Matilda is dead!"

"Matilda dead? How did she die?"

She was drowned in the wreck of the Norsemen's ship, the 'Frida.' And because she is dead, my father, I desire to renounce the world and become a monk. I am desolate and friendless, proscribed by the king, believed to be dead. I have no money to bring to the abbey, only myself. Will you accept me?"

"Ranulph is dead, and has bequeathed to you what fortune he possessed," said the abbot. "He died after your capture by the Norsemen."

"Then the money he left to me I will give to the abbey," said Ivar, after expressing his grief at his foster-father's death.

"We will see," said the abbot, with an affectionate smile upon the knight. "You were ever dear to me, Ivar. I will gladly accept you as one of our brotherhood. I will guarantee your safety here even from Reginald. But you are not of the stuff of which monks are made. You were formed for king's courts and battle-fields and tournaments. You are brave and spirited, ambitious, and determined. Our quiet, studious life will not suit you."

"Let me judge for myself of that, good father."

"You can join us, Ivar, and during the novitiate year you can better judge if the cloister be indeed your vocation," said the old abbot, with paternal kindness. "If your old instincts re-assert themselves, or if you tire of

our life, you can go back to the world. If you elect to remain and take the final vows, I own, my son, that I shall be greatly pleased and content. I should like to keep you with us."

"Let me take the earliest vows this very day," said Ivar, impetuously. "I desire before I sleep to be bound to you in the ties of the holy brotherhood."

The abbot saw that Ivar's soul was sorely anguished, and he consented to receive him into the fraternity of monks without delay.

The abbot was alive to the glory of winning this young warrior into the service of the church; the fortune of Ranulph was not to be despised even by the wealthy convent; but neither of these considerations had so much influence with the worthy Baron of the Isles as his own deep-rooted affection for this waif of the sea, the noble knight whose life had been pure and gentle, brave and chivalrous, and whose name had become a synonym of bravery and chivalry.

The monks were called together in the great refectory, and informed of the accession to their ranks.

Then the entire brotherhood adjourned to the chapel, and there, with much ceremony, the knight Ivar took upon himself the vows of the Cistercian monks, and became one of their number, receiving, with his new vocation, the name of Brother Aloysius.

And thus it was that when the Lady Matilda, whom Ivar so deeply mourned, recovered her senses after her long illness, and received with undoubting faith the tidings that he was dead, not even King Reginald knew that, though the knight Ivar had ceased to exist, Matilda's lover still lived in the person of the new monk at St. Mary's—the Brother Aloysius.

We left Matilda, seated at her window, stunned by the false tidings of Ivar's death and burial.

King Reginald had just been announced. Before the maiden had had time to compose her anguished features, or subdue the first wild outburst of her great grief, the clangor of spurred footsteps rang out upon the hard-wood floor of the great hall, and the monarch, in all the bravery of royal apparel, entered with slow and courtly step her bower-chamber.

Matilda was alone with the venerable Lady Godiva, her maids having been dismissed some time before.

She rose up at the king's entrance and made obeisance after a mechanical fashion, and the Lady Godiva murmured words of welcome to the royal visitor.

"I am glad to see you alone, fair Matilda," said the king gallantly, noting with inward satisfaction the absence of waiting-women, and counting the aged spinster as a mere nonentity. "I have come to beg a private audience with you."

"Your majesty must permit us to offer our hospitality first," said the Lady Godiva, courteously.

"Thanks, no," said the king. "We stopped last night at the castle of the good knight Galter, not three miles below this place, and are not at all fatigued."

And now Reginald noticed more plainly that which had impressed him from the very moment of his entrance—namely, the pallor and disorder of Matilda's features.

"I thought that the Lady Matilda was nearly well again," he said, with concern. "Yet she looks ill—"

"I am ill," said the maiden, her voice low and tremulous. "I have just heard terrible news!"

The king exchanged glances with the Lady Godiva.

"Be seated, I pray you, ladies," he said, with gentle courtesy. "You have heard, fair Matilda, I see, the news of Ivar's death? I supposed that you had been told long since and that your first grief had been spent. My visit is inopportune."

"If your majesty will kindly excuse me," said Matilda. "I will retire to my own room for a little while."

And with a low bow and faltering steps she hurried into an inner room and closed the door.

The king looked at the Lady Godiva in dismay.

"She should have been told before," he said. "The knight hath been dead and buried for weeks now."

"Your majesty forgets that the Lady Matilda has been delirious with fever, and that the leech would not allow the truth to be told to her. Not until your royal train came in sight could I find the courage to tell her," said the Lady Godiva, gravely.

"I have come here to urge anew my suit," said the king. "The knight Ivar is dead, and she can no longer have reason to refuse me. You have great influence with your niece, Lady Godiva. I pray you use that influence in my favour. The monarch to whom all bow in fear and subjection sues most humbly for the love and the hand of Matilda. Tell her this."

"I will tell her, my lord."

The king took a turn up and down the room, looking anxious and troubled.

"My people are discontented," he said, giving utterance to his secret thoughts. "I am told that they murmur greatly among themselves. They call me profligate. But were I to marry the daughter of Godred these malcontents would be appeased. Matilda has birth, youth, beauty, and fortune. She is fit even for a throne. I have made secret investigation by means of trusty agents, and I find that all classes favour this alliance which I propose, and that a marriage between myself and Matilda will silence all murmurings against me. Therefore, the marriage must take place. Besides, I love her. There is no longer any obstacle between us. She must be mine!"

"I will tell her what your majesty bids me," said the Lady Godiva, "but this is scarcely a time, my lord, to urge your suit. She is newly stricken with great grief. She has a constant nature, and I doubt not that Ivar dead is more to her than the greatest monarch living. Pardon my frankness, your majesty. It were better for me to speak the truth plainly than to suffer you to believe an error."

The king flushed angrily.

"Your advice, Lady Godiva, will greatly influence Matilda. She is but a girl yet and subject to guidance. Should you desire her to pine away for Ivar, or to live here lonely and unwedded to old age, as you have done?"

"Not so," said the spinster. "I should prefer her to be happily married. But young hearts can not be forced, my lord, and Matilda must decide her fate for herself. I own that I would like to see her queen; I believe that your majesty loves her and would study her happiness, and my influence shall be exerted in favour of the alliance you propose."

"And now, my lord, let me offer you the hospitalities of our castle. Permit Matilda to indulge in her grief this one day. To-morrow, I promise you, she will see you and consider the flattering offer you would make her."

The king acceded to this proposition, as no good could come of forcing himself upon the attention of Matilda in her present great grief.

The castellan was summoned, and Reginald was shown to a lordly suite of rooms, where his favourite courtiers joined him. The king and his followers made merry throughout the day and evening, while Matilda remained secluded in her own rooms, not seeing even her aunt, and giving way utterly to the tornado of grief which had so suddenly swept over her young life and made it bare and desolate.

But when night came on and the hour grew late, and the household began to grow quiet in slumber, the Lady Godiva gained access to Matilda's room, and the two wept and talked together throughout the long hours that followed before the day dawned.

Soon after breakfast, at which Matilda did not appear, Reginald sent a request to be allowed to attend upon her.

A favourable answer was returned, and, a little later, the king was shown again into the maiden's bower-chamber.

Matilda, her aunt, and their attendants were in waiting to receive him. All were clothed in black, but the Lady Matilda's attire was the most sombre.

Her long black gown came up high about her slender throat, her fair hair was covered with a black drapery, and the only white about her was in her face, and that was wan and piteous in its despair, pallid and woeful, so that Reginald started back in amazement at sight of it.

Matilda and her women bowed low before the king, but no smile irradiated the girl's sorrowful visage. Reginald was startled and confused by this unexpected display of mourning garb, and felt abashed before the maiden he had come to woo.

"I ask a private audience with you, Lady Matilda," he said, concealing his annoyance. "I have somewhat to say to your ears alone."

The maiden made a gesture to her attendants, and all save the Lady Godiva retired into the adjoining room.

"I am aware," said the king, with some embarrassment, "that this is a most inopportune moment in which to urge my suit. But I am come here for this purpose, and am not willing to go hence with my errand unsaid. The Lady Godiva has, I trust, informed you of what I said to her yesterday?"

Matilda bowed coldly.

"Ivar is dead," continued Reginald, "and consequently your engagement to marry him is ended. You are free to marry whom you will. I offer myself as your suitor. I love you, Matilda, and I will make you Queen of Man, mistress of loyal subjects, the greatest lady in my realm. I do not ask an answer to my suit this morning. I do, however, ask you to think upon my offer, and I will return here in a month hence to receive your response and to celebrate our betrothal."

"You can have my answer now, my lord," said Matilda, calmly. "I regard myself as the widow of Ivar. Since he is dead I shall never marry, but go down to my grave unwedded. Your majesty need not return at some future time for your answer. Take it now. I decline the alliance you offer me. I will not marry you."

"How?" cried Reginald, angrily. "Ivar is dead—and you still refuse me?"

"I regard you as Ivar's murderer! How had he ever harmed you?" cried Matilda, passionately. "He was noble, brave, chivalrous. You hated him and exiled him, and set a price upon his head. He is dead—and you killed him!"

"This to me! Have a care, girl! You speak to your king!"

"And what a king!" cried Matilda, scornfully. "Do you think I could clasp hands with Ivar's enemy? That I could wed with Ivar's murderer? No, no—a thousand times no!" and she shuddered. "My lord, we go now to celebrate a mass for the repose of Ivar's soul. The candles are lighted at the altar; the chaplain waits. Will you go with us?"

"Not I!" answered the king. "I am done with the dead, it is the living who claim my attention. I excuse much that you have said because of the newness of your affliction. I shall return—"

"It will be useless. I am done with the world," said Matilda. "In losing Ivar, I have lost all. I shall retire into the Priory of Douglas, if the good prioress will receive me, and devote the remainder of my life to prayers for the repose of Ivar's soul!"

"You shall not!" cried Reginald. "What, enrich that priory, which is rich already, with your fortune? Hide that splendid beauty in a cloister! Devote your youth to prayers and beads. You shall not! I will wed you by force, I will make you mine in spite of yourself—"

Matilda arrested his words by a gesture, full of haughty command.

"Hush!" she said. "You forget yourself, King Reginald. Were you to attempt what you threaten the island would rise against you! I shall go to the priory as soon as I am able. It will be well for you not to come here again, for I would sooner die than marry the murderer of Ivar! There, you have my answer! I shall not

change it. Come, my dear aunt, let us go to the chapel."

She touched a silver bell and her attendants appeared.

The king, full of chagrin, stood in silence, while the Lady Godiva and Matilda, arm in arm, passed out, followed by their train.

Mass was celebrated in the castle-chapel, but the king did not linger.

Long before it was ended he had summoned certain of his trustworthy adherents, had issued his commands to them, and stationed them in the castle as spies upon the Lady Matilda, ordering them to communicate with him daily, informing him of her movements and the state of her health.

"If she sets out for the Priory of Douglas," he concluded, "let me know at once. I can intercept her on the way and turn her steps to the royal castle! Be prompt and swift and keen and you shall win my spurs!"

And so, leaving his spies behind him, the king departed with his train.

"I have got my lady in a net," he muttered to himself, as he rode over the drawbridge. "She will fret a little, at first, for Ivar, but she may decide to accept the honours I offer her. If she keeps to her resolution to become a nun, then I will intercept her on her way to Douglas and force her to become mine. In any and every case, she is in my power. I have only to wait a month and she will be mine!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Lady Matilda went from the chapel, after the celebration of mass, to the castle crypt, and was there shown the tomb in which the supposed body of Ivar had been laid.

Lighted candles had been placed at the head and foot of the tomb, and their faint yellow circles of light only made more apparent the surrounding darkness.

Dismissing her attendants, the maiden spent several hours in prayers for the repose of Ivar's soul.

Then, faint and weary and pale, she returned to her own rooms.

Day after day she continued to visit the damp crypt to pray beside the tomb in which she believed the body of Ivar to repose.

Her devotions and indulgence in grief retarded her recovery, but did not prevent it. She would have been glad to die. The world without Ivar was a desert.

But slowly health and strength came back to her frame, and her thoughts settled without wavering upon the vocation she had chosen—the shadow and seclusion of the cloister.

A month passed, during which King Reginald twice visited Castle Grand, and twice appealed to the maiden's ambition and declared his passionate love for her, and twice resorted to threatenings when she repulsed his suit.

During this period the Lady Matilda had established negotiations with the Prioress of Douglas, the Baroness of the Isles, with a view to her entrance into the nunnery.

The maiden had never visited the priory, but she had heard much of the noble prioress, who had been the first wife of King Harold, the elder brother of Reginald, and the story of whose life had in it much of romance and vicissitude.

The magnificence of Lady Etheldreda's court, her power, nearly equal to that of Reginald, and tales of her grandeur of soul, her intellect, her heart, had been early impressed upon Matilda, and it seemed to her, in her present desolation, that a refuge in the stately old priory, under the guidance and care of the noble Lady Etheldreda, where she might pass her days and nights in prayers, would be next thing to that heaven which she believed Ivar's enfranchised soul to have entered.

The prioress replied to her overtures with kindly interest and sympathy.

The daughter of the late knight Godred was well-born, young, beautiful, and an heiress. She would be a desirable acquisition to the nunnery in every respect, yet the good prioress urged

her to well consider her desires, and to do nothing which she might thereafter repent.

Several letters were interchanged through the media of private messengers, and at last it was settled that Matilda should visit the nunnery at her own good pleasure, and that whenever she should arrive she should be welcome. Matilda appointed a time for her arrival, and the matter was thus settled.

The castellan of Castle Grand, as we have stated, was a knight, nobly born, and had been a comrade-in-arms of Godred. He loved the beautiful young heiress as if she had been his own daughter, and kept his eyes single to her interests.

"Sit down, Olave," said the maiden, kindly. "I have something to say to you and will come to the point at once. Have you heard aught of my intention to leave home and become a nun?"

"Yes, my lady," replied the castellan. "The Lady Godiva has talked with me upon this subject much of late."

"Then you doubtless know my motives, and I need not stop to explain them," said the girl. "You know that life for me has lost its charms. Without Ivar the world is to me a prison. I have made arrangements with the Prioress of Douglas, and two days hence I shall set out with a suitable escort for the priory. You will make provisions for the journey, Olave. I would wish to go in a style befitting my dignity."

The castellan's face clouded.

"Will you not, my lady, reconsider your decision?" he asked, respectfully. "You are so young to leave the world. The cloister is but a grave."

"So much the better. I have heard all these arguments from my aunt, Olave. Spare me their repetition. My decision is made. Nothing can change it. And now let us speak of the castle. You will continue here in charge as heretofore. My dear aunt, the Lady Godiva, will be mistress in my stead. This will be her home as long as she lives, and I desire her to feel that it belongs to her. She does not need my care. She has a nurse and attendants who are devoted to her. See that she lacks nothing, good Olave, and remember that whatever you do for her shall be in my sight as done for me."

"But, my lady," said Olave, "if you become a nun, shall you not bestow your property upon the church?"

"I have discussed that question by letter with the Lady Etheldreda. I cannot allow my aunt to be removed from this place, and the matter is arranged to suit me. Of course, if I give myself I shall give my property to the Priory of Douglas. But the prioress has heard that King Reginald seeks me in marriage. She has bid me consider well what I renounce in entering the cloister."

"And, although she would not influence my decision, yet she sets before me the two lives within my choice, painting each in its true colours. She reminds me, too, that I cannot take upon me at once the irrevocable vows. I shall be for the first year on probation—a novice, you know. If then I desire to retreat I may do so. But if I desire to keep to my vocation, I shall take the final vows from which there is no drawing back. I wish that I might take those vows at once, but the prioress writes to me, like a wise and tender mother, and I cannot gainsay her will."

"Heaven grant that during your novitiate, my lady, you may decide that the cloister is not your vocation, so that you may return home," said the castellan. "But your will is law here, and there is none to gainsay you. About this matter of the journey? You know, my lady, that the king has certain minions in this house to spy upon us, and report to his majesty. Every day a messenger is sent to the king with the gossip of the castle. Last evening I overheard these fellows in converse in the armoury. They did not see me. One, their chief, was saying that you were about to seek the Priory of Douglas, and that he had orders to inform the king in all haste when you should set out upon the journey."

"For what purpose?"

"The Baroness of the Isles is absolute in her own domains," replied the castellan. "She has complete jurisdiction over her tenants, and can even take them away from the Lords' Courts and try them by a jury of her own tenants. King Reginald, with all his power, cannot remove anyone from her charge who chooses to become her subject. Once you are in the priory, you are beyond his power. He is on friendly terms with the Baroness of the Isles, but she would never relinquish into his hands a noble damsel who had sought refuge in her cloister as a nun. The king knows all this. And he has planned to come upon your train at some point of your journey and take you captive and convey you to his royal castle. This I heard his minions say."

Matilda's eyes flashed.

"Reginald, with all his wickedness, would not dare do this!" she exclaimed.

"Ah, my lady, you do not know the king. When did he ever fear to do evil? He has wronged many of noble birth—he has despoiled many a happy home. Throughout the realm, among high and low, there broods a sullen, deepening wrath against him. Some day a mighty rebellion will shake this kingdom and the tyrant will be hurled from his throne or killed. Were he to marry you, my lady, all classes would be pleased, and the current of public opinion might be changed. This is his one hope. Besides the conviction that such alliances would prove his safety, he loves you. Fear and passion then inspire him to make you his queen. It is thus he has determined to capture you on your way to the priory."

"But would not such violence only further inflame the people against him?"

"He would expect to coerce you into an immediate marriage, my lady, and so no harm could result to himself," replied the castellan. "If you are determined to go to the priory, you must go forth secretly by the route by which you made your escape before from this castle. You cannot leave openly by the drawbridge."

"Then I will go forth secretly," said Matilda, with decision. "Old Mary shall go with me, as before. You must have horses and men in waiting for me in the oak wood, and we will journey in haste and by night."

"It will easily be done, my lady. To-morrow I shall send away, with secret orders, a dozen mounted men, one at a time. And to-morrow, my lady, you should keep your room and feign to be ill. To-morrow evening I will close the gates as usual and suffer none to go forth, but you and the old dame shall steal away by the secret route and join the mounted men in the oak wood by the Druid's Spring. And the next day, after you are gone, I will still feign that you are ill. So shall suspicion be averted and the king outwitted."

This plan met with Matilda's approval, the castellan departed, intent upon its execution.

The maiden summoned her aunt and her waiting-women, all of whom she could trust. She imparted to them her design, and throughout the remainder of the day remained in strict retirement.

The story went forth through the castle that she was again ill—that she had suffered a relapse—and a messenger departed to carry the tale to King Reginald.

During the day the castellan sent away half-a-dozen mounted men separately, upon apparently trivial errands, but with secret orders.

The next day the Lady Matilda still remained in her own room, and the story went forth that she was quite ill, and in a worse condition than upon the previous day.

A mounted messenger set out with this tale also to King Reginald.

And the castellan, devising trivial errands for half-a-dozen other of the castle-guards, sent them forth also, with secret orders, without exciting the suspicions of the king's minions.

That evening, before the lamps were lighted, when a deep dusk filled the grim old corridors and the king's spies were gathered in the great hall before a cheerful blaze, drinking and carousing, only one of their number on guard in

the courtyard, the Lady Matilda and her old nurse, shrouded in long, dusky garments, and bearing baskets filled with stores for the journey, stole forth from the maiden's rooms. They flitted like shadows down the long, dark corridors, their footsteps muffled, their movements silent, and crept down the private stairs, flight after flight, until they gained the cellars.

How dark it was in this damp subterranean place.

They had no light, but Matilda knew every inch of the way and was brave to excess. Clinging to each other, their hearts beating almost audibly, for old Mary was afraid, and it seemed to Matilda that her enemies lurked in the darkness, they hurried down to the burial crypts.

They closed the door of the crypt behind them, securing it upon the outside as before. Then Matilda drew a lantern from beneath her cloak, turned on its light, and knelt by the tomb she believed Ivar's, and prayed fervently.

They traversed the secret route that led from the crypt to the outer world, with fleet footsteps.

They gained the opening into the wood, and at last were out under the night sky, with the free winds blowing around them, and Castle Grand, with its safety and its perils, a mile distant upon the rocky heights.

Now for the Druid's Spring! A mile of hard and toilsome march still intervened between them and the rendezvous, but they pressed forward without pause, and at last gained the little dell in which the spring was situated.

All was still here as death. Blackness of darkness reigned under the thick growing oaks.

Old Mary trembled. Matilda called softly the word that had been agreed upon as a signal to her followers.

As if by magic, at the sound, a dozen men started forth from the surrounding gloom. Old Mary gave a little shriek, but the answering signal came clear and true, and Matilda welcomed them with a sense of great relief.

"Where are you, my lady?" asked a voice she recognised as that of a trustworthy old squire who had taught her to ride in her childhood.

"Here, Edward," she answered, groping in the gloom and finding his hand. "And here is Mary also!"

"The horses are in the wood by the roadside not far away," said the old squire. "Come, my lady."

The group hurried forward swiftly.

The horses were found, Matilda and old Mary were mounted, the others leaped into their saddles, and the little cavalcade set forward upon their journey, moving with what speed a regard for safety allowed.

"We've a long, hard ride before us," said the old squire, keeping a fast hold upon Matilda's bridle-rein. "Heaven and the good saints grant that we make it in safety. My mind misgives me lest the king's spies have been too sharp upon us, and have planned a pitfall for us. Heaven keep us against their treachery!"

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

THE Chinese official Almanac, issued annually in December by the government at Peking, is a scientific publication of no slight importance, inasmuch as it circulates regularly among populations comprising about one-third of mankind. It contains no mention of eclipses, but gives the times of the moon's quarters, and the times of sunrise and sunset for forty-eight days in the year. As to the moon's motions, only three per cent. of the predictions are correct, the range of error for two years being from fifteen minutes fast to twenty-six minutes slow. As to sunrise and sunset, the percentage of correct predictions is about four. The times of the solstices

and equinoxes are computed too slow, the greatest error being forty-nine minutes, in the case of the autumnal equinox. So much for the astronomical portion of the almanac; but the astrological part occupies a great deal more space in the book, and is doubtless deemed of more consequence by the readers. It consists largely of statements under each date as to whether the day is favourable or unfavourable for certain acts. Thus the first day of the current Chinese year is said to be favourable for entering school, but not for beginning a journey, the fifth for visiting but not for planting, and so on. This advice is very influential even in the most intelligent classes.

An autopsy on the body of a Frenchman of recognised talent, who was a member of an association for mutual post-mortem examination, is described in the published proceedings of the Paris Anthropological Society. These associates agreed to advance science by consigning their remains to purposes of medical study. A noteworthy increase of knowledge has already resulted from this arrangement. A fissure in the brain, whose depth has heretofore been regarded as a mark of mental inferiority, was peculiarly deep in the case of the gentleman we have mentioned, yet his intelligence and ability were unquestionable; so that here we have evidence indicating that an important physiological assumption is erroneous.

Some valuable observations upon the plague in the Chinese Empire have been contributed by Mr. E. Rocher, of the Customs Service in that country, to a volume of medical reports lately published by the Inspector-General of Customs in China. The disease has been most destructive in the province of Yunnan, where it is said to have decimated the population within a few years. The fact that animals living in the ground are the first creatures to be attacked inclines Mr. Rocher to the opinion that the malady originates in some exhalation from the soil. Rats are apt to be the earliest victims in a given locality, while dogs suffer least of all from the epidemic.

The results of Mr. H. C. Sorby's researches on the colour of human hair have been published in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute. He finds hair to be "a colourless, horny substance, tinted in different specimens by three or possibly four distinct pigmentary bodies." The pigments are red, yellow, and black. Sulphuric acid, variously diluted, will wash them or rather dissolve them out of the hair, the horn-like substance of which, however, prevents water from having any similar effect. Strangely enough, the jet-black hair of the African negro is found to contain just as much of the red pigment as the bright red hair of a European.

ENCKE's well-known comet of short period was seen by Dr. B. A. Gould, at the national observatory of the Argentine Republic, Cordova, in August last. He describes it in a communication to a German journal as "resembling a small and dense white cloud, nearly circular, but of undefined outline, and without indication of any tail." This comet is noteworthy as being one whose movements have specially tended to confirm the notion of the existence of some ethereal matter in space, which, however tenuous, still has an effect to retard the motions of the heavenly bodies.

THE French Minister of Education has sent Captain Roudaire, of the French Navy, to Algeria again, with two civil engineers, to make further investigations as to the practicability of forming an inland sea in Northern Africa, by flooding a part of the Sahara from the Mediterranean. It is expected that their report will finally settle this question, which has been the subject of much discussion in scientific circles in France.

MR. A. S. WILSON, botanist, has made an interesting calculation concerning the quantity of sugar secreted by flowers furnishing their favourite food to bees. The proportion of saccharine is found to be very small in each in-

stance, and to collect a pound of honey from red clover it appears that 2,500,000 visits must be made to the flowers. This statement serves to give some idea of the prodigious industry of honey-bees.

An announcement that a fossil bone of great antiquity had been unearthed at Castleton, America, has been published. The bone was found in a formation consisting of glacial sand and boulders, 9ft. below the surface of the ground, and is believed to belong to some extinct species of animal. It ought to be submitted to scientific scrutiny.

The use of glass as a material for weights in balances employed by scientific men, where a high and delicate degree of accuracy is required, has lately been recommended in Germany by Professor F. Mohr. The glass should contain a large percentage of silica.

An Italian chemist has recently pointed out that salicylic acid possessed the property of purifying water, to a remarkable degree. We have not seen any statement, however, of the manner or proportions in which it should be used for this purpose.

THE STORY OF A PRETTY WOMAN.

FROM her babyhood it was apparent that the part which Letitia Floyd would play in life was that of a pretty woman.

Downy, dimpled, audacious, persuasive, she gained her will and carried her points because she was "so pretty."

No wonder that at eighteen she possessed the simplest, most unaffected confidence in her powers.

It was a dreary winter day; sodden, lead-coloured clouds overhead; frozen slush under foot. Just the day for bad tidings, and bad tidings those were which had come to the Floyds.

A week before the husband and father had been buried. That had been hard enough—too hard, the widow and children thought, to bear.

And now, crushed by death and loss, they were to be still farther afflicted by poverty. Their home was mortgaged; the business in confusion, a life insurance policy of six hundred pounds was all that remained for the widow and her children.

They sat dismally in the sitting-room, which, despite their afflictions, was a cheerful place, with its crimson carpet, the bright table-cover, the ivies and ferns in a south window, the work-baskets and school-books, and other incidentals of family life, scattered about.

Mrs. Floyd, heavy-eyed, in her new black dress, was knitting a grey sock before the fire. Leila, the youngest, a slight girl of thirteen, occupied the window-seat, from which she furtively watched her brother, who in muffler and mittens was shovelling the snow from the plank walk without.

With no pretence of occupation, Letitia sat by the centre-table, her arms folded before her upon it.

She was a tall, slim girl with velvety hazel eyes, and soft, light brown hair.

So many girls have hazel eyes and brown hair, and even round tapering arms and nice pink finger-tips, like Letitia—and yet not many are as pretty as she.

Something in the way she turned her well-set head and thrust out her slender foot provoked admiration as much as her fair skin and red lips and soft eyes.

"It is you girls I think of," said Mrs. Floyd, suddenly dropping the stocking in her lap and pressing her handkerchief to her eyes. "I expected to give you opportunities, and now there's no knowing but you may have to work for your living."

"Well, that is an opportunity—of a certain kind," laughed Letitia. "And I am not sure but it is a good one. I have always felt as if I

would like adventures. I am surfeited with tides and tea-parties."

Mrs. Floyd sighed, as if the levity pained her. "Depend upon it, mamma, it is all for the best," said Letitia, consolingly.

"Oh, my child, you know nothing about it. If you had graduated from the Institute, as I begged you to do, you might have got a situation to teach; but you wouldn't study, and now what can you do that is respectable?"

"Please don't blame me for not graduating, mamma. I hated books, and in fact I couldn't use learning if I had it. But there are things I can do, and which I will do if you will only trust me. Don't give up so, dear mamma. Leave it to me. I shall do something to help us all out of the strait—I feel sure I shall. Trust to me."

Poor Mrs. Floyd sighed again.

Letitia's confidence only increased her despondency.

What could the dear girl do? She might marry, of course. But who?

Mrs. Floyd was not in the least a strong-minded person, and the picture of a rich husband for her pretty Letitia was as pleasing as any she could paint in those sad days; but she was practical likewise; and among the village beaux whose attentions had caused Letitia to arch her pretty head more loftily than common, the mother could not select one whose qualifications entitled him to be considered a "match" for her pretty daughter.

She repeated her sigh.

"I wish I had not bought such expensive craps," she said. "And we need not have had folds on our dresses, if we had known. Mason and Holmes will have a large bill against us."

Letitia started and coloured slightly. Mr. Holmes, the merchant, was a widower; a stout man with iron-grey hair and several disagreeable children.

Letitia recalled some things; how he had invited her to go out riding; how there had been a lace handkerchief for her on the Christmas-tree at the church social, which she shrewdly suspected to come from the well-to-do merchant.

And how, worse than all, at that very social, Mr. Holmes had brought his youngest hopeful up to the ice-cream table, where Letitia was presiding, and bidden the youngster to "kiss the pretty lady."

"Pray, mamma, pay their bill the moment it is presented," said the girl, sharply. "We don't want to be under obligations to them, of all people."

"That is just the point," replied Mrs. Floyd, despondingly. "We don't want to be under such obligations to anybody. But where shall we get the money?"

Letitia was hardly prepared for this practical application of poverty.

"We must sell something, if there's no other way," she said, with decision. "I will not owe money to Mr. Holmes."

Tom came in from his snow-shovelling just then, ruddy and blustering.

"I say, mother, isn't there some cold meat or pie or something a fellow can have to eat? I am awful hungry."

"I'll see, dear," Mrs. Floyd said, rising uncomfortably conscious of the restricted marketing of the last few days, and with a vague idea that for Tom, milk-toast would constitute a very unsatisfactory supper.

The early twilight was coming on. There was a knock at the side-door opening into the sitting-room.

Letitia started. What if it were Mr. Holmes' bill? Or Mr. Holmes himself, come to ask her to marry him in order to avoid paying his bill?

She opened the door, and found only her Uncle Jason. She was so relieved that she clutched the old gentleman's hand almost hysterically.

"Alone—eh?" he asked, stepping in.

"Uncle Jason," she began, abruptly, "I want to ask you something. I want you to get me a place—something to do."



[SEALING HER FATE.]

"Umph!" said Uncle Jason, stroking his beard, and indulging in some contemptuous opinions concerning womankind. "There's a place I could secure," he said, "if any of you were fit to take it. I came up to see your mother about it. I did not know but Tom—how old is he?"

"Tom is fifteen. But please, Uncle Jason, let me have the place? It is necessary that I should earn some money."

"Umph—yes. You might do it, if you were not so confounded pretty."

"Oh, please don't call me pretty," urged Letitia. "What kind of a place is it?"

"In a ticket agent's office. Child's work. Do you s'pose you could give folks a civil answer and the right change?"

"Certainly," said Letitia, rather stiffly; but she remembered the crape, the best English, and so many yards of it. "I would try my best," she added.

"That sounds fair. Has Tom left school?"

"No; but he would if he could get anything to do."

"I'll try and look out for something. Work won't hurt any of you. I'm glad you've got some grit. I s'pose you'll pick up a husband, though, 'fore long."

Letitia's lip curled. She forbore to answer, and Uncle Jason, declining her invitation to stop and see her mother, went off, denouncing the slippery steps.

It had all been so sudden Letitia could hardly realise that she was to go to work.

"I wish it had been something more re-

tired," sighed Mrs. Floyd. "People will stare at you so."

"Oh, I can take care of myself," said Letitia.

But there were people who did not agree with her. First among them, Mr. Holmes. He came into the office on the afternoon of the second day during which Letitia had done duty, and came up to the window. The girl nodded coolly, feeling quite secure behind her fortifications.

"Really, Miss Floyd, I did not know—in fact, I have just learned that—that—"

"That I had gone to work."

"I was deeply pained, I assure you. Were you not rather hasty? Your many friends—"

"My best friends did their best," interrupted Letitia, "in getting me a situation. I shall soon be able to pay my debts—my debt to you among them."

"Do not speak of it, Miss Floyd. I—in fact, I—I beg that you will never think of it again. Do you find your duties arduous?"

"Well, work is work, as you probably know, Mr. Holmes."

"Yes, I begun at the foot of the ladder myself, as a cash-boy. Now I am worth ten thousand pounds and a comfortable home."

"You encourage me," said Letitia, drily.

Mr. Holmes thrust his head within the window.

"I wish I could encourage you to think better of me than I fear you do," he said, in a low tone. "I value your good opinion highly. I should be glad to purchase it with all I am worth."

"Dear me," said Letitia, anxiously, "one's opinion is not to be bought like linen or silk, Mr. Holmes."

"True; and neither is money to be despised," returned the gentleman, a little disturbed that his advances met with no warmer reception. Letitia Floyd was no better than his own shop-girls now, he reflected. She ought to feel honoured by his interest.

Uncle Jason stepped in just then. He was bound that his niece should not dishonour the recommendation he had given her, and he was keeping watch of her movements, having slight confidence in girls.

"Eh? Gossiping?" he said, in his curt way.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Steere," the merchant hastened to say. "When one has business with a charming young lady like Miss Floyd one is apt to forget themselves. I am going to see my sister, and Bertie is to go with me. My sister has some young ladies from Buxton visiting her. A little party this evening. You are here, I suppose, until—"

"Yes; I am here till half-past nine."

"My horse and carriage will be on hand, and I shall insist on driving you home."

Whereupon Mr. Holmes turned away.

"Going to marry that man, Letitia?" growled Uncle Jason.

"No."

"Let him drive home by himself, then. I'll tell Tom to come down for you to-night."

Within a week Uncle Jason stopped at the ticket-office again.

"It's about as I expected, Letty; your time'll soon be up here."

"Why so?"

"Well, you see you're a girl."

"Haven't I done my work well?"

"That isn't the point."

"What is it, then?"

"Well, you see, Jones, the telegraph operator, is going to give up. As long as he was here, I felt as if you were safe enough. But now there's a young fellow from Birmingham coming in, a stranger—"

"I can take care of myself," said Letitia.

"Well, you see, you're so plaguy pretty. If it weren't for that—"

"Oh, everybody don't agree with you, Uncle Jason."

"Yes, they do. I should never have found out you were pretty if I didn't hear everybody saying so. Now, you see, here's this young fellow nobody knows who, a comin', and you so pretty right here next door. And no telling what will come of it."

"But I won't have anything to say to him, Uncle Jason."

"Will you promise that?"

"Why, yes, if you want me to."

This conversation was held through the window of the ticket-office, and as Uncle Jason turned his portly form aside, Letitia saw a gentleman who was waiting to speak to him.

"Mr. Steere, I believe, chairman of the company?"

"Yes, sir."

"My name is Horton—of Birmingham. I am here to fill the place of telegraph operator."

"I see, sir. Be kind enough to step this way."

Letitia's eyes followed her new neighbour. He was a tall, erect, square-shouldered young fellow, with a serious face and a well-bred air.

He gave her a casual look as he passed, with no indication of surprise at seeing so pretty a woman in her position, nor, for that matter, of any interest whatsoever on her account.

After a brief conversation with her uncle, he went into the telegraph office, and throughout the afternoon was engaged in arranging his books, microscope, and other belongings.

As he sat at his instrument his back was toward the ticket office, and as days went by Letitia discovered that he never sat in any other position.

He was a student, seemingly, for all his spare time was given to his books.

He gave her a courteous good-morning and

good-evening as they met and parted day after day, but beyond this had apparently no intention of cultivating her acquaintance. Letitia reflected with some pique that her promise to her uncle had been quite superfluous.

Letitia had to walk a little way to take her tramcar, and one unlucky evening in March she was hastening on, conscious that Mr. Horton was just behind her, when she slipped and fell on a strip of ice.

It was an awkward and disagreeable thing to do; still more awkward and disagreeable to be assisted by Mr. Horton to the sidewalk; to find that her ankle was hurt; to have to lean half fainting upon his arm, and to be supported to the car.

He sat down beside her, and between pain and pride Letitia thought she had never in her life been so miserable before.

"Do not be alarmed," he said, quietly, to Mrs. Floyd. "I fear your daughter has sprained her ankle, but no worse."

He laid Letitia on the couch, dipped his handkerchief in a glass of water and placed it on her head, and opened a window, all the while Mrs. Floyd was fetching the sal volatile.

Letitia opened her eyes, and saw Ralph Horton standing over her with tender concern in his face.

"Bandage her ankle with ice-water at once," he said to her mother; "it is important to keep it from swelling."

Afterward they all remembered how prompt and helpful he was. For the moment no one noticed.

Poor Letitia lay on the couch for six long weeks while Tom took her place at the office. It was not at all a romantic or interesting episode.

The doctor's bill accumulated; Tom's share of the housework devolved, in his absence, upon Leila, and Mrs. Floyd's anxieties were doubled.

"I should never have fallen," said Letitia, "if I had not been trying to keep ahead of that odious Ralph Horton."

Mr. Horton knew nothing, however, of the responsibility he had incurred. He did not even call, as one might have thought he would, to inquire how Miss Floyd got on.

"I should have thought he would have been gentlemanly enough to do that, at least," complained the invalid.

Mr. Holmes considered her misfortune as his opportunity.

His attentions became pronounced.

Grapes and oranges, which Letitia would not touch, and magazines, which she would not read, came almost daily as his tribute of admiration.

As soon as she was able to walk across the floor, he proposed taking her to ride.

"Do go, Letitia dear," said Mrs. Floyd. "You are so weak and nervous from confinement. You will never get strong until you get out in the air."

"I won't go with him. He would think I meant to marry him."

Mrs. Floyd sighed. After all, it would be a relief if Letitia were to marry.

She was too pretty to have to earn her living; and Mr. Holmes was well-off and safe.

And his bill was no nearer being paid than ever.

Two weeks later Letitia went back to the office.

"I am glad to see that you have recovered, Miss Floyd," Ralph Horton said.

"I want to thank you for your assistance the night I fell, Mr. Horton."

"Do not speak of it," he said. Then, seeing a quiver of pain cross her face, he added, "As I have not spoken of my sympathy for your misfortune, you need not speak of your gratitude. Is that fair?"

"It hardly matters," said Letitia, coldly.

"It matters more to me than you perhaps surmise, Miss Floyd. It required all the strength of mind I possess to prevent my taking advantage of your illness, to form your acquaintance."

Letitia looked rather scornful.

"You have had a good many opportunities to form my acquaintance, which have not seemed to tempt you particularly," she said, with a smile.

"May I tell you why?"

"Really, Mr. Horton, I have no claim to your reasons."

"But will you permit me to give them?"

And without waiting for her consent, he added, "I overheard your conversation with Mr. Steere—your uncle—the morning I came; your promise to have nothing to say to me, and, as you can fancy, I decided to be on the defensive. Does this absolve me, Miss Floyd?"

Letitia coloured at the recollection of her pledge.

"I have not conceded that you need any absolution," she said, lightly.

"You may believe that under ordinary circumstances I should not seek for any," said Mr. Horton, gravely.

"I believe I am forgetting my promise to Uncle Jason, and your policy of self-defence," returned Letitia.

"I have abandoned my policy—will you not likewise abandon your promise?"

"Why should we?" she asked, with embarrassment.

"Because it is natural and agreeable to do so. Miss Floyd, let me tell you something of myself. I am studying to be a physician. Next winter I expect to pass the examinations which will secure my degree. I am poor. That is why I have taken this situation, which supports me and still leaves me time to study. Under the circumstances, I have avoided society. I have hoped to avoid all feelings of interest in or of admiration for any woman."

"Fate most unexpectedly threw me in your way. I turned my face from you. I sought by every means to prevent myself from seeing you, from thinking of you, but in spite of all—shall I offend you if I say that since my first glance I have thought of you altogether too much for my own peace of mind?"

Letitia felt that she held the cards in her hand again.

She liked this grave-eyed young man who had rather ignored her, and she thought she should enjoy punishing him.

"I am sorry to be the means of shaking your good resolutions," she said, demurely.

"Somehow, Miss Floyd, I am glad to have them shaken," he answered.

Letitia was in good spirits that evening when she went home.

"I am so glad to get to work again," she said.

She noticed that her mother was unusually silent. At bed-time she followed Letitia to her room.

"I want to consult with you, dear. I think you are strong enough now to bear some things which I kept from you while you were ill. The truth is, Letitia, I hardly know how to get along from day to day. The interest on the mortgage is due—I find that it is Mr. Holmes who holds the mortgage. Tom and Leila need shoes. We are out of coal. No one cares to trust us any longer."

"My wages?" said Letitia, faintly.

"They are all spent."

"Uncle Jason?"

"There is little use asking him."

"Oh, mother, what shall we do?"

"I have something to tell you, Letitia. I thought I would not tell you until you realised how we were situated. I have had a call from Mr. Holmes to-day. He made you a formal offer of marriage. Hear me through, Letitia," she said, as the girl made a gesture of protest. "His offer is not to be lightly treated. You will have an indulgent husband; a good home. Moreover, he suggested that the mortgage on the house would make a suitable wedding present."

"I hate him," was Letitia's answer.

"I had also a letter to-day from a person of whom I daresay you have never heard; an aunt of your father's by the name of Rolleston. She is a rich elderly woman. She says she will take one of you girls for six months. Now, dear

Letitia, if you were married, and Leila with your Aunt Rolleston, what a relief to my mind. I could pinch and save and get our debts paid."

"Oh, mother, let me go."

"How, then, are we to live, Letitia?"

"Uncle Jason will help us. I am sure he will. I will ask him. And I will marry somebody, but not Mr. Holmes. I can't marry him. But someone who will be rich and generous."

Mrs. Floyd sighed. She had reached the period when sentiment counts for little and comfort for much. But Letitia had her way, as she had had it before.

"Aunt Rolleston will give me lovely dresses," she said, "and take me about to show me off, and I shall find the 'fated fairy prince,' you may be sure. And we shall all be happy."

Uncle Jason was less stolid than usual when Letitia appealed to him, explaining Aunt Rolleston's offer.

"I won't see them suffer," he said. "Tom can have your place in the office—that will help. And I shan't be obliged to watch him. You're a pretty good girl, though, Letitia. I guess you kept your word—"

"No, I didn't, Uncle Jason."

"What?"

"I talked to Ralph Horton nearly an hour to-day."

"Humph! Time you went off, then."

On the evening prior to Letitia's departure Mr. Horton called to say good-bye.

"If you should remain until September, we may meet there when I come on to attend my last course of lectures. Besides, I know your aunt, Mrs. Rolleston."

"Do you indeed? Oh, pray tell me about her."

"It is better for you to form your own opinion. I think she and I could not be trusted to describe each other fairly."

"Why not?"

"We have had some differences of opinion."

"Then you know her quite well?"

"Her husband was my mother's brother."

"How odd! Then she is likewise Aunt Rolleston to you."

"Miss Floyd," said the young man, abruptly, "I hope you will not permit her to prejudice you against me? Will it startle you, will it annoy you, if I tell you that I love you? I know that I am scarcely more than a stranger, but I ask you for nothing but permission to tell you that I love you. I cannot let you go without claiming the chance of being remembered which that confession will give me."

He spoke rapidly. Letitia half winced at his words.

"I am sorry—for your good opinion," she said.

"Because you cannot return it?" he asked.

"Because, Mr. Horton, my feelings can never be of any consequence to anybody. I am pledged to marry a rich man, someone who is able and willing to help my family."

"Ah, Letitia, what a cruel pledge! But—"

"You were going to remind me that I broke one pledge?" she asked, as he hesitated.

"No, I was not. And yet I thought of it. I was going to say that perhaps I should be a rich man some day."

"I hope you will."

"And in that case—"

"Please, Mr. Horton, do not torture me. How came I to tell you what I have told? How came we to be talking about such things?"

"I don't know, unless they were so near our hearts."

"We must not talk of them any longer."

"I do not believe we shall forget one another," he said, "before September."

Letitia sighed.

She felt sorry that she was going away; sorry that she was to marry a rich man, and only glad to think that she should meet Ralph Horton in September.

"Are you ready for dinner, Letitia?" Mrs. Rolleston tapped lightly at the door and entered her niece's room.

This worldly-wise matron was playing a deep game.

She had been unexpectedly moved on Letitia's arrival to find her so pretty a woman.

"I expected to have a dowdy little country girl on my hands, but my niece has beauty and style. I shall rise to the occasion," she explained to a friend.

"How old are you?" she asked Letitia.

"Eighteen."

"Has any gentleman ever shown you attention?"

"Yes—two have proposed to me."

"That is unfortunate. I should have preferred you quite fresh. A girl never behaves quite the same after she has had experience. However, you suit me very well. Should you like a rich husband?"

"Very much."

"That sounds sensible. I will help you to secure one."

Letitia was admired. That was inevitable.

But somehow it became apparent that her taste was rather fastidious. She held herself aloof from very desirable parties, and when her aunt once or twice suggested the propriety of trifling encouragement to one or another, the girl answered:

"Oh, I don't like him. I might as well have taken an old widower with some disagreeable children, who wanted me, at home."

But one day something happened.

Mrs. Rolleston had had a few photographs taken of her niece, and had distributed them judiciously.

One fell into the hands of the most aristocratic of her acquaintances, a Mrs. De Wolf. In its place upon her centre-table it had been noticed by no less a person than the Hon. Allen McTavish, youngest son of a distinguished Scotch family.

"That's the prettiest face I've seen," was the young man's verdict, duly reported a few days later to Mrs. Rolleston.

Mrs. Rolleston made her plans accordingly. The Hon. Allen McTavish must meet pretty Letitia Floyd.

New dresses and bonnets were necessary, but Mrs. Rolleston, having put her hand to the plough, did not turn back. She appeared at a ball with Letitia dressed in a lovely white grenade with crimson knots.

The Hon. McTavish recognised the original of the photograph he had admired, besought an introduction, and distinguished Letitia by his attentions.

A three-days' flirtation at a watering-place carries things a great way.

Bathing, driving, dancing together, Letitia and the Scotchman were well acquainted at the end of that time.

"You grow prettier every hour," Mrs. Rolleston said, approvingly, when she had entered the young lady's room. "And you are a good manager, too, Letitia; but, take a bit of advice from an old woman; don't encourage McTavish too fast. They all like a girl who holds off a trifle."

"McTavish," repeated Letitia: "why, I have no idea of encouraging him at all."

Mrs. Rolleston bit her lip.

"Of course you realise how very eligible he is?"

"I don't know that I do. I don't fancy him particularly."

"You have something besides your fancies to consider, allow me to say. You desire to make a good match. I have gone to some expense to put you in this young man's way. I expect you to act with discretion."

"Dear Aunt Rolleston, I should not fancy Mr. McTavish as a husband, at all."

"I wish you would not use that obnoxious word so much. I should really like to see the man whom you would fancy—as you call it. I doubt if he exists."

"Oh, yes, he does," said Letitia, with a bright blush.

"Indeed! So you have put me to all this

trouble, intending all the while to marry some low creature in the end."

"He is not at all low, and, until lately, I did not think that I liked him so well," said Letitia humbly; "but the more I see of men, the more I am convinced that he is the only one I could marry."

"And he, I suppose, has not a shilling?"

"I suppose not."

"What is his name, pray? This is getting interesting."

"His name is Ralph Horton. He says he knows you, aunt."

"Ralph Horton, indeed! Where in the world did you come across him? Why, he is as good as engaged. At least—he is well aware—What do you know about him?"

"Enough to doubt that he is as good as engaged, Aunt Rolleston."

"Perhaps I should have said that he ought to be engaged, thanks to me. Yes, I know him. I have taken great interest in him, and I put him in the way of getting a rich wife. Lizzie Hunt, whom you have met, is ready to marry him any time; and unless he marries her, he will lose my approbation and the two thousand pounds which, according to Mr. Rolleston's suggestion, I intend leaving him if he merits my favour."

"He will never marry her, Aunt Rolleston."

"Really, miss, how do you know?"

"Because he loves me."

"This is absurd," said Mrs. Rolleston. "Here are you two young people, you and Ralph, in whom I will admit I am interested. The one thing most necessary to each of you is to marry well. Ralph has talent, and you have beauty. I put him in the way of a rich wife, and you in the way of a rich husband, and the result is, you are stupid enough to prefer—of all people—each other. You have not told me yet where you met."

Letitia told the story in a few words.

"I am horribly disappointed in you," said Mrs. Rolleston. "I shall take you back to-morrow."

"Dear aunt, nothing could suit me better, for Mr. Horton said he should be in town this month."

They went down to dinner.

Mr. McTavish was waiting for them in the hall.

He had secured a seat at their table. They were scarcely served, however, before Letitia detected, in the distant part of the dining-room, Ralph Horton's familiar face.

"I had to come," he explained afterward. "I heard through Leila that your aunt wrote how much you were admired—that you had a Scotch nobleman at your feet, and all that. I could not give up all chance, Letitia. Will you send me back hopeless?"

"No," said Letitia, calmly.

They went back to town together, and directly Mr. McTavish followed them.

"I am deucedly in love with your pretty friend of the photograph," he explained to Mrs. De Wolf. "Somehow she has given me the slip. How can I find her?"

Mrs. De Wolf smiled to herself.

"Give me Rolleston for a manager," she said.

"She knows how to play her game. To McTavish: 'Miss Floyd is in town. I will have them here to lunch to-morrow.'"

Easier said than done.

Mrs. Rolleston was happy to lunch with her friend, but Miss Floyd had gone to a flower-show.

Thither the young Scotchman followed her, and through the screen of some tall cactuses, flaming with their scarlet flowers, this is what he heard:

"It is not what I ought to do, Ralph. I promised mother, too, that I would marry some one. But I can't bear to think of anyone else. It must be that I love you."

"Don't say those words so dolefully, darling. They are more precious to me than a fortune."

"But everybody will be so disappointed in us."

"We shall not disappoint them in the end. And, anyway, I don't believe they have any

right to dispose of us. See if I don't do more for Leila and your mother than a rich man would, yet."

"I am so happy, Ralph."

"And I, too, Letitia."

"Now we must go home and tell Aunt Rolleston."

"You are very stupid children, and I would have stopped it if I could," said that lady; "but I have no fault to find with either of you, except falling in love with each other, and I shan't desert you. Ralph shall have the interest of the two thousand pounds which will be his in the end. But you, miss, need not expect any wedding present, after all the finery I bought for you with which to captivate McTavish!"

"Didn't I captivate him, aunt?" asked Letitia slyly.

"You know what I mean, saucebox. I am going to send you home, and see what I can do for Leila. I am glad she's not so pretty as you. She'll be more tractable."

"Well, Letty," was Uncle Jason's greeting to Letitia on her return. "I suppose you're going to make some great match. They say that is what you went off for."

"Yes, I am, uncle. I am going to marry the man I love."

"And who may he be?"

"Ralph Horton."

"Humph!" said Uncle Jason; "I thought the man you could get along without speaking to must have some uncommon power over you. But you're a pretty sensible little girl, Letty, and I shan't forget you when it comes time for the wedding."

W. F. F.

FACETIÆ.

A FIEND IN HUMAN SHAPE.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I've just caught these two young rascals making a slide in front of your doorstep, and they say as you gave 'em permission?"

"It's quite correct. I did, policeman. The fact is, I expect my mother-in-law to luncheon."

—Punch.

RED TAPE.

A STORY illustrative of red tape in Russia is told by an artiste who was for a time connected with a Moscow theatre, and wishing to make a short excursion into the country, went to get her passports countersigned by the local authorities.

The presiding official inquired for her "written petition."

"My written petition!" cried the lady; "I have none. I never knew that anything of the kind was required."

"Not required, madame? On the contrary, nothing can be done without it. Take this sheet of paper and write according to my dictation."

She transcribed word for word a formal petition requesting leave of absence, which was then signed, folded, and sealed.

"And now," quoth the man in office, "you have only to deliver it."

"To whom, pray?"

"To whom," echoed the official, with a smile at the absurdity of the question. "To me, of course."

The document was handed across the table to him.

The great man adjusted his spectacles, broke the seal, gravely read over his own composition, and said:

"Madame, I have read your petition, and I regret to tell you that I am unable to grant it."

THE "PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY."

HOBBERDY (at a loss for conversation): "Haw—yesterday was a very dull day. Aw—but—aw—I think to-day is—aw—duller than yesterday."

(Clara thinks if there is anything duller than the weather it is Hobberdy.)

—Judy.

VERY LIKELY.

A COXCOMB, talking of the transmigration of souls, says:

"In the time of Moses I have no doubt I was a golden calf."

"Very likely," replies a lady: "time has robbed you of nothing but the gilding."

"THE INTELLIGENT FOREIGNER."

MISS SMITH: "Can you pick out Archie and Kate down there, Mr. Camembert?"

MR. C.: "Oh, yes! I am ver' good-looking!"

MISS S.: "That does not mean 'keen-sighted.'"

MR. C.: "Ah, yes, yes! Vat I mean I am looking ver' well!" —Fun.

AN Ethnological Fact—There are no mad Tartars.

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

SEVENTY-EIGHT has "hove" his brick,
And Time's old carving-knife
Has duly notch'd th' eternal stick—
Sev'n-nine begins his life.

Sev'n-nine begins to count on gains,
Sev'n-eight has wept his loss;
Sev'n-eight is o'er his aches and pains,
Sev'n-nine takes up the cross. —Fun.

GOOD BREEDING.

CARMAN (with great politeness, to old gentleman who is "coming a cropper" on a slide):
"Pray be seated, sir!" —Fun.

CHRISTIANITY (?)

It appears that in New Zealand, when the marriage ceremony takes place, it is a very old custom to knock the heads of the bride and bridegroom together previous to their union. But—

"In Christian lands it isn't so;
The bridegroom and the bride
To loggerheads but seldom go
Until the knot is tied."

THE CONVERTED CLOWN.

RUSSIA: "Oh, Mr. Policeman, I've seen the errors of my ways, and I'll never do so no more, sir—not till the next time." —Fun.

CREDULOUS FOLK.

THE Romans believed that every man had a genius! —Fun.

MOTTO FOR BRISTOL.

DE GUEST-ibus non est disputandum. —Fun.

HEATH-ENS.

(Innocents in search of school-bored companions playing the truant.)

FIRST: "Hi! Bill, they be they."

SECOND: "Nos, you fule! Why, them's them 'ere." —Fun.

NEXT TIME.

"My love," said an adoring husband to his second wife, as they were leaving the church where they had just been married, "my love, how embarrassed you seemed to be. I was afraid you wouldn't get through with the ceremony."

"Oh, well, you know, my dear, this is my first marriage. Next time I shall be as cool as can be."

STATISTICS.

OUR CONSUMPTION OF FOREIGN FOOD.—Official returns show in detail the increase in the last ten years in our consumption of various imported articles of food. The consumption of foreign and colonial wheat and wheat flour (the imports, less the exports) increased from 140 lbs. per head of population of the United Kingdom in 1867 to 203 lbs. per head in 1877. The consumption of raw sugar has risen from 40 lbs. per head in 1867 to 54 lbs. in 1877, and of refined sugar from 3 lbs. to 11 lbs.; of tea, from 3.63 lbs. to 4.52 lbs.; of eggs from 13 to

22 in number; of potatoes, from 5 lbs. in 1867 to nearly 27 lbs. in 1877; and though this was exceptionally large the quantity has never fallen below 13 lbs. per head since 1871. The consumption of spirits shows an increase of 0.99 gallon per head in 1867 to 1.23 gallon in 1877. Coffee shows a decline from 1.04 lb. per head in 1867 to 0.96 lb. in 1877.

MAY WILL BE THY BRIDE.

WHEN first we met, long years ago,

When all look'd bright and fair,
Methought, but yet, I did not know
That thou to me wert dear.

My heart was light, my mind was gay,
I rambled far and wide;

Yet oft some secret thought would say,
"May will be thy bride."

But on I went, regardless still

E'en of thy thoughts or mine;

I had a heart, I had a will

In song and dance to shine;

I bid farewell to every care,

All troubles I defied;

Still something whispered in my ear,

"May will be thy bride."

Tired at last of song and dance,

I sought thy home once more,

And met thee, ah! as if by chance,

Near the old cottage door.

I dare not ask if thou wouldst wed,

Thinking to be denied.

Again some whispering angel said,

"May will be thy bride."

And so it is, and nought but death

Shall part us, May dear,

But long as I am blest with breath

I'll strive thy heart to cheer.

And when fast in declining years,

Let whatsoever betide,

Those words will still ring in my ears,

"May will be thy bride." J. L.

GEMS.

NOTHING is more fatal to happiness or virtue than the confidence which flatters us with an opinion of our own strength, and by assuring us of the power of retreat, precipitates us into hazard. To every man there is a point fixed, beyond which if he passes he will not easily return.

WHEN, to gratify a private appetite, it is once resolved upon that an ignorant and helpless creature shall be sacrificed, it is an easy matter to pick up sticks enough from any thicket where it has strayed to make a fire to offer it up with.

PERSONS who like to contemplate their own importance should consider that the world got along very well before they were born, and will probably get along equally well after they are dead.

HE who looks on beauty with a pure affection forgets the loveliness of the body in that of the soul and rises by the means of that earthly beauty to the great artist, to the very essence of loveliness.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO PICKLE EGGS.—Sixteen eggs, one quart of vinegar, half ounce of black pepper, half ounce of Jamaica pepper, half ounce of ginger. Boil the eggs for twelve minutes, then dip them into cold water, and take off the shell. Put the vinegar, with the pepper and ginger, into a stew-pan, and let it simmer for ten minutes. Now place the eggs in a jar, pour over them the vinegar, &c., boiling hot, and when cold, tie

them down with a bladder to exclude the air. This pickle will be ready for use in a month.

TARTAR SAUCE.—Put the yolks of four eggs into a basin, with salt and mustard to taste, and stir olive oil into them one tablespoonful at a time; after each tablespoonful of oil put in one teaspoonful of tarragon vinegar. Keep on doing this until the sauce is of the desired consistency; then add pepper, the least bit of cayenne, and a couple of shallots, or a few pickled gherkins or onions chopped very finely.

OLD BACHELOR'S CHICKEN PIE.—Put your chicken in a pot, with as much water as you wish gravy. If the chicken is young, it will be only necessary to let it come to a boil; don't forget to season it. For the crust, three pints of flour, rub three teaspoonfuls of cream tartar and a half cup of butter thoroughly through it; one and a half teaspoonfuls of soda must be dissolved in hot water; put in milk to make it stiff enough to roll out. Butter the dish you are to bake it in (a deep earthen one is the best), put the dough around the sides, not the bottom, then pour in the chicken, but first thicken the gravy. Now put on the top crust and bake.

FOR OILING WALNUT FURNITURE.—Raw linseed-oil rubbed with a flannel cloth, then polish with a dry piece of flannel; be careful not to put too much on.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Flocks of snipe are appearing in the southern part of Somersetshire in large numbers.

A RECENT telegram from Afghanistan in the "Standard" cost £800.

BAENUM's manager has arrived in England in search of novelties for "the greatest show on earth."

It is said that the Queen is about to have a monument erected to the memory of the Princess Alice in Whippingham Church.

MR. IRVING's theatre has been most beautifully done up, at a cost, they say, of about £30,000.

SOMEONE proposes to attach an electric light to cabs, the apparatus to be worked by the wheels.

A PAPER is to be floated in London devoted exclusively to Eastern affairs, with special reference to Turkish and Egyptian finance.

UNTIL further orders, the minimum height of the Royal Artillery (gunner) recruits will be raised from 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 8 inches.

A CONTEMPORARY in the farming interest has squared the circle. He says at the last fair there were about 1,000 head, and adds they all "come from a circle ten miles square."

MR. B. ST. JOHN ACKERS, of Prinknash Park, has sustained a serious loss by the death of one of his short-horn bulls, a splendid animal, valued at 800 guineas.

THE Lord Provost of Glasgow has received a letter from the Marquis of Bute, contributing £1,000 to the City Bank Shareholders' Relief Fund and £200 to assist in relieving the distress among the unemployed in the city.

GENEROUS LANDLORDS.—Owing to the depression in agricultural affairs amongst the tenant farmers, a great many landed proprietors have allowed their tenantry from 10 to 15 per cent. off their rents.

TRADE has evidently revived in America, as we hear of a New Year's gift consisting of diamond lace costing £1000 a yard! The lace is in imitation of old point made in flagree silver, with diamonds set in the pattern.

It is at present arranged that the marriage of Lord Richard Grosvenor, M.P., with Miss Ella Stubber, of Moyn, Queen's Co., shall take place the last week of February. The Duke and Duchess of Westminster will be present on the occasion.

THE "Life of the Prince Consort" will be completed in five instead of four volumes, as originally intended. Three volumes have been already issued, and Mr. Martin expects that the concluding two will be published together towards the close of the year.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. B.—Steam will not pass through a coiled pipe with greater force than it will through a straight one.

GEO. W. asks: 1. "Why is it that a cannon ball, when shot up perpendicularly from the earth, does not have the same velocity or force in coming down as in going up? 2. If shot up in a vacuum would not the ball returning strike the cannon's mouth with a force equal to that with which it had started. 3. Is not the resistance of the air greater in the downward course of the ball than in the upward? If so, does not the fact of the air being between the weight of the ball and the earth make the air in a measure compressed or more dense?" 1. The difference in velocity is due to the resistance of the air. 2. Yes. 3. We think not, perceptibly.

R. W.—We do not know about Armitage's Charity. Probably you refer to Arneway's Charity. This is instituted to lend sums of not less than £50 nor more than £200 at 3 per cent. to poor occupiers or traders giving two householders as security upon real property. The office is at 7, Great Queen Street, Westminster.

A YOUNG HOUSEKEEPER.—An interesting article on Etiquette, Dinner Parties, &c., will appear in our next issue.

P. P. H.—We have repeatedly stated that to attempt to remove moles is unadvisable and dangerous. Consult a medical man.

YEATERS.—Forward your communication to the Editor, 334, Strand. For anything we may insert on this page we make no charge whatever.

A CONSTANT READER.—Beyond your husband's sanction to live apart from him, his letter means nothing. He can withdraw his sanction at any time. If you can obtain a livelihood we should advise you not to let him know your whereabouts, and presently make an application to a magistrate for an order to protect your earnings.

FRED.—Make a propeller 3 ft. in diameter and 4 ft. pitch—boller with about 250 square feet of efficient heating surface. It will be necessary to carry a high pressure of steam to make the speed you desire.

ALPHA.—Thanks for your disinterested commendation. We shall labour to make the LONDON READER the first of its class.

OLIVER.—We know of no such compound as nitrate of oxygen. 2. Nitrogen chloride is formed by the reaction of chlorine and ammonia, both of which are gases when dry.

Q.—Under ordinary circumstances wood cannot be ignited by steam.

S. W.—Persevere. A girl such as you describe is worth more effort to an honest man than you seem to have yet made. Let the lady see that you are rather more than thinking of her as a business-partner—that you love her and cannot do without her. Then she will first pity, and then love, and then marry you.

MAUD.—Of the many dyes of commerce we prefer what are known as Judson's, a domestic dye which has stood the test of many years; it is sold by all chemists, at a uniform price of sixpence for all colours.

F. B.—We advise you at once to reconcile your silly quarrel, and never to have another of that kind.

ALFRED.—The only real obstacle in your way seems to be the father's opposition. Go bravely to work to remove that, and obtain his consent to address his daughter.

BENJAMIN.—We think there are no supernatural or "spiritual" phenomena in them at all. We think spirits are otherwise employed than in fussing about the feet of tables and of curious lady investigators. We think the late Mr. Heller's theory was well founded as it was well illustrated, and we have never yet known any well-authenticated case of the spirits imparting any practical knowledge that was not already in the mind of either the operator or the interrogator. There are curious things about the phenomena, as there are about dreams, coincidences, diseases, and the like, but there is no real "supernatural" yet proved.

W. E.—Back pressure is the pressure opposed to the motion of the piston.

RONALD.—You must know yourself whether or not you had sent any money in a letter to be invested, and if you had not you may be sure the whole thing is a downright swindle. But you have nothing to complain of if you proposed to accept the proceeds of money which you had never remitted.

ALICE.—We know of no such book as the one you mention.

M. M., seventeen, light hair, blue eyes, loving, and of medium height, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two.

J. H. and B. H., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. J. H. is twenty-one, blue eyes, fair. B. H. is twenty, dark hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition.

G. E., twenty-one, would like to correspond with a lady about nineteen.

J. W. and H. L., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. J. W. is twenty-four, dark, fond of home and children, brown hair, blue eyes. H. L. is twenty-one, dark brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, loving, medium height. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty.

RHOA, twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and children, domesticated, tall, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-four, dark, medium height.

EMILY, seventeen, dark hair and eyes, of medium height, would like to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony.

J. P. and S. A., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies about eighteen. Both are twenty-two, good-looking.

C. D. and E. B., two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. C. D. is twenty-four, good-tempered, of a loving disposition, fond of home. E. B. is twenty, medium height, fair.

EMERALD, twenty-five, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age, dark, domesticated.

B. H., twenty-eight, dark hair and eyes, domesticated, loving, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about forty-five.

MARIE, eighteen, brown hair, blue eyes, loving, of medium height, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about twenty, fond of home.

A SIMILAR CASE.

JACK, I hear you've gone and done it,
Yes, I know—most fellows will;
Went and tried it once myself, sir,
Though, you see, I'm single still.
And you met her—did you tell me—
Down at Margate last July?
And resolved to ask the question
At a soiree? So did I.

I suppose you left the ball-room
With its music and its light;
For they say love's flame is brightest
In the darkness of the night.
Well, you walked along together,
Overhead the starlight sky,
And I'll bet—old man, confess it—
You were frightened. So was I.

So you strolled along the terrace,
Saw the summer moonlight pour
All its radiance on the waters
As they rippled on the shore,
Till at length you gathered courage,
When you saw that none was nigh—
Did you draw her close and tell her
That you loved her? So did I.

Well, I needn't ask you farther,
And I'm sure I wish you joy,
Think I'll wander down and see you
When you're married—ah, my boy?
When the honeymoon is over
And you're settled down, we'll try
What? The deuce you say? Rejected.
Yes, rejected? So was I! A. R. A.

L. M. and C. N., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. L. M. is twenty, brown hair, hazel eyes. C. N. is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes.

ALICE and LILLIAN, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Alice is nineteen, tall, dark hair and eyes. Lillian is nineteen, fair, medium height, blue eyes. Respondents must be fond of home and music.

G. L. and F. G., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. G. L. is twenty-three, medium height. F. G. is twenty, tall. Respondents must be fond of music and dancing, good-looking.

ANNE, twenty-one, fond of home, medium height, dark, thoroughly domesticated, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, good-tempered, and fond of home.

HAND & HEART would like to correspond with a young lady. He is twenty-three, brown hair, medium height, good-tempered.

A. W., twenty-two, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home, wishes to correspond with a young man about twenty-six, medium height, good-looking, fond of home.

TED and EDWARD, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Ted is eighteen, tall, blue eyes. Edward is seventeen, dark hair and eyes. Respondents must be fond of home and children.

JACK, twenty-one, dark, a seaman in the Royal Navy, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young lady about his own age, good-looking, light brown hair, hazel eyes, tall, fond of music.

EMERALD, twenty-one, fond of home and children, loving, golden hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-four, dark hair, brown eyes, good-looking, medium height, fond of home and children.

NELLIE, twenty-one, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age.

NOTICE

FOR THE NEW YEAR, 1879.

THE advent of the new year, and the infusion of new blood into our Editorial Department will be pregnant, we trust, with results alike beneficial to our readers and satisfactory to ourselves. Entering upon the new year resolute for the work, it will be our ambition to make the LONDON READER equal, if not superior, to its contemporaries. Those who have passed from childhood to middle age as subscribers to the LONDON READER will well understand our rule—to have every number fresh, original, and attractive, which can only be assured by the engagement of the best writers.

There is no verdict so reliable as that of the people, who admit that the LONDON READER is not merely distinguished for its unequalled Tales and Sketches, but contains an entertaining and useful variety of Biography, Articles, Poetry, History, Anecdotes, Facetiae, and General Information.

For the current year the LONDON READER will continue its successful career under the most favourable auspices, and those who have never taken it would speedily do so if they knew half the good things in store for our readers. Our staff of contributors will comprise the liveliest storytellers, and number amongst them the best authors of the day in every department of literature.

Our reading matter, household receipts, &c., will be specially selected and written for the instruction and amusement of young men and women, and as nothing will appear which may not be read by every member of a family, we confidently look forward to increasing our already enormous circulation.

With the view of encouraging embryo genius, we invite amateur authors to forward to the Editor their lucubrations, with the assurance that they will receive our best attention. The multifarious queries of our correspondents will be answered by a gentleman possessing acumen, knowledge, and experience, and altogether we confidently rely upon making our LONDON READER as superior to its contemporaries as is an Hyperion to a Satyr. As it is the largest, so it will be our care to make it the best, and therefore the cheapest, of the numerous Penny Weeklies.—Ed.]

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

M. L. D. is responded to by—Florie, seventeen, dark hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, tall, and fond of home.

EVIE by—John, fair, fond of music.

MAUD by—William, dark, fond of home.

MAUD by—T. D.

P. F. by—Puss, nineteen.

G. C. by—Floss, nineteen.

B. C. by—Little Lizzie, short, dark, of a loving disposition.

W. B. by—Nancy L., nineteen, dark.

G. W. by—Trifle, twenty-one, medium height, domesticated.

TRIXIE by—Sylvander.

AUDREY by—N. B.

FLORENCE MURIEL by—Engineer.

LAURA B. by—T. H., dark, good-looking, fond of home and children.

ALL the Back Numbers, Parts, and Volumes of THE LONDON READER are in print, and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom Post Free for Three-halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

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†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

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